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لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْحَيُّ الْقَيُّومُ

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THE
APOCALYPSE INTERPRETED

IN THE LIGHT OF

“THE DAY OF THE LORD,”

BY THE

✓
REV. JAMES KELLY, M.A.,

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AUTHOR OF LECTURES ON PROPHECY, ETC. ETC.

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PREFACE TO VOLUME SECOND.



IN accomplishing a Second Volume of this work, the Author cannot find himself brought so far through his undertaking, amidst much to interrupt, without again recording his thanks to the God of all grace, who has permitted him, however humbly, thus to vindicate the Apocalypse from the cabalistical character so generally assigned to it; and to show, by actual examination, that the direction in which to look for its fulfilments, lies not in the history of Christendom which is past, and deposited in human records,—but rather in that of Israel, which is yet to come, as rehearsed in the other prophecies of Scripture.

Of course, this impugning of the popular system of interpretation was not a thing to be brooked by its patrons, and so the Author has had to encounter the measure of animadversion usual on such occasions. Nor does he by any means except to this. Fair discussion, he reflects, is ever promotive of the cause of truth. But in one quarter—the pages of “The Quarterly Journal

of Prophecy,"*—he is constrained to say, the censure administered was of so unfair a character, as to render a reply on his part indispensable.† Hereupon, the Rev. T. R. Birks proved to be *the Censor*, and again came to the charge;‡ which led the Author to rejoin at equal length, but in vain, as regarded the insertion of his letter in the Journal; for at this stage of the discussion, the Editor, in the exercise of his discretion, declined affording further space to the subject.

Under these circumstances, especially as the matter seems apposite, the paper in question is now added, and in its original form. Its very purport, as a rejoinder to the arguments of so acute a writer as Mr. Birks, may render it more interesting to the reader :—

APOCALYPTIC INTERPRETATION.

To the Editor of The Quarterly Journal of Prophecy.

DEAR SIR,

I am glad that the writer of the article "On the Scope of the Apocalypse" has at length come to the light on the subject of his treatment of my Pamphlet; but I am unaffectedly sorry that he turns out to be Mr. Birks. For, although not enjoying the advantage of his personal acquaintance, I believed that, as an able

* Vol. i., pp. 38—56.

† Vol. i., pp. 216—222, 335—341, 457—462, 587—594. Vol. ii., pp. 125—127.

‡ Vol. ii., pp. 117—125, 240—248.

man, he could afford to give any adversary fair play, and as a gracious man, none other was to be apprehended from him. Certainly experience, in the present case, has disappointed me. Still, far be it from me to detract from his reputation on either head. I simply put it to him, was it right—was it worthy of him, to review my Pamphlet so severely, and yet suppress all clue to its recognition? And now what is his defence? He alleges:—

“In suppressing the name, I have been unfair to myself, rather than to the brother whom I have offended (?) Whoever wished to procure his Pamphlet, could obtain it, as easily as if named, by a line to your Publisher, since Mr. K’s works were advertized in the same number; and besides a perusal of it is what was most required for my own vindication from the charge of having written too severely.”

Here, besides the unintelligible clause to which I have annexed a note of interrogation, it is pleaded that my works, including the one under notice, were advertised in the same number of the Journal which contained Mr. Birks’ article. But how could this mere accident have influenced Mr. B., who did not know of it till the Journal was published? Again, how could it be expected that from a general similarity of subject, a reader would identify an unnamed pamphlet with one in a column of advertisements? And as to his writing to the Publisher of the Journal for information, why should it be thought that the latter would be able to give it? For, surely, books might be reviewed in the Journal, with which he had no connexion as Publisher.

Nor, as the case was, could it have occurred to him, as an experienced man, that a work to which the Author's name was fully attached, was the same with one alluded to, without the clue of Author or Publisher, by a respectable reviewer in his own periodical! I admit, that probably by writing to the Editor, a very inquisitive reader might discover, by a notice in the following number of the Journal, that my Pamphlet was the one alluded to. But was it fair, I ask, was it conformable to precedent for Mr. Birks to so write his review that only readers of this stamp, and after so long an interval, could satisfy themselves on the point. The "secret wound," as Mr. Birks calls it, of which I complain, has been inflicted, I repeat, not on myself, but on the cause of which I am an humble advocate.

I. But now to turn to the question of Apocalyptic interpretation. I had asserted that the chief use of Prophecy, as issuing from the Divine mind, was to warn and comfort the Church, prior to its fulfilment. Mr. Birks denies this:—"I deny," he writes, "that it (namely, warning before fulfilment,) *is ever the principal purpose.*" But how does he prove his position? By adducing the texts—"Now, I have told you before it come to pass, that when it is come to pass, ye might believe," (John xiv. 29); and—"These things understood not his disciples at the first: but when Jesus was glorified, then remembered they that these things were written of him, and that they had done these things unto him." John xii. 16. Now, taking Mr. B's interpretation of these texts, surely they only prove at the

utmost, that prophecy is *sometimes* designed to serve its end after fulfilment. Whereas, the proposition Mr. B. set himself to maintain was, the reader will remember, an universal negative: "I deny that it is *ever*," &c. This is certainly not careful reasoning from such a man as Mr. Birks. But, further, Mr. Birks forgets that to the last of their days of companionship with their Master, the disciples, who were thus addressed, occasionally faltered as to his Messiahship; and therefore, the *assurance* of their minds, on this point, by the accurate fulfilment of his predictions, is rather analogous to the bearing of prophecy upon the *world*. And that it was at such assurance our Lord aimed, in the texts in question, seems plain from another passage obviously parallel, and suggesting their right interpretation: "Now I tell you before it come, that when it is come to pass, ye may believe *that I am he*." John xiii. 19. Hence, unless the Church of God now, is assumed to be in the equivocal position of needing evidence to prove that "JESUS IS THE CHRIST," the purport of prophecy to them is not explained by Mr. Birks' references.

II. By way of shewing the utter incongruity of my principle, Mr. Birks alludes to the case of prophecies early fulfilled, and alleges that, with me,—

"A purpose terminating on a few individuals, is of higher importance than one which affects the whole Church of God throughout every age of the world's history."

My reply to this is, with Bishop Butler, to whom I must again refer Mr. Birks, that we are not competent judges beforehand of what events it were important for the

word of prophecy to treat, nor how numerous the parties it should enlighten. But if Mr. Birks intends (for his meaning here is, I must say, obscure) to make me appear as though I undervalue prophecy, when fulfilled, because I contend that *its primary use* appertains to a period prior to fulfilment, he is under a mistake. I entertain no such unworthy thought as that any event which has been dignified by being made a subject of recital in the Word of God, should ever lose its interest in our eyes by lapse of time. Sure I am that in the Divine selection of matter, which the Scriptures contain, as in all God's works, there is *manifold* wisdom, and that reference thereto, throughout the ages to come, will be pregnant with profit to even the glorified saint. But this interferes not with such Scriptural matter, possessing a primary advantage, *in its simple aspect as prophecy—i. e.,* as apprizing the saint of the future. Moreover, in whatsoever generation of the Church this latter advantage is realized, the other,—the historical improvement may be, at once, collected. For, the faith that says, “*these things shall be,*” can forthwith proceed to treat them as extant and moralize from them accordingly. On the other hand, it is obvious that wherever Prophecy has *not* served as a light to the future, but is only a memorial of the past, the advantage accrues from it, *not as prophecy, but as history.* For, as to the mere comparison of the event with the prediction—from this, it is obvious, no improvement is derivable beyond the discernment of the Divine prescience ; and such improvement—to meet again Mr. B.'s remark about

important prophecies—is quite independent of the character of the event; accuracy of correspondence being that alone, which, in this view of the subject, is recognized. Thus, the conformity between prophecy and event in the fact of our Lord's crucifixion between the two thieves, and his interment in the tomb of the rich man, shows the Divine prescience as plainly as when prophecy and event relate to transactions of the most vital import. What is to be objected to, then, in Mr. Birks and the school of writers to which he belongs, is that, with the exception of vouching the inspiration of the Scriptures, *which is not required by the believer*, he accords to prophecy no peculiarity which does not attach to history. Nor will it do for Mr. B. to admit the warning character of the former, and then dismiss it as a comparatively minor object with the Spirit. For whatever the estimate formed of it, (and I need not here argue the point,) it is an element which, so far as the believer is concerned, constitutes the *essential difference* between Prophecy and History; and to look not for its operation, in our interpretation of the Prophetic Word, is practically to disparage a prominent feature of the Divine wisdom, or to charge upon God a vain display of its resources.

As to the important character of the present period of the world's history, which Mr. Birks maintains, cannot be condemned to prophetic silence, let me remind him that there are significant hints given by God himself that the present age, with all its importance, is not taken into account by Him, in his dealings with the

world. For example, in the Prophet Isaiah, God calls it "*a small moment*," as the interval of Israel's rejection: "For a small moment have I forsaken thee, but with great mercies will I gather thee." Isaiah liv. 7.

With this Divine estimate of the last eighteen centuries, (and, precisely I submit, because answering to the idea of a parenthesis,) what a contrast is presented in Mr. Birks' style of allusion to the same period:—"*The most essential and important part of the vast scheme of God's moral government: The history of the Church, in its privileges, and of the world, in its greatest intellectual development, for nearly two thousand years: The whole dispensation of the Spirit which crowns the previous revelations of God in the immediate preparation for a kingdom of glory.*"

Surely, from this discrepancy of sentiment, Mr. Birks ought to see that he is not looking at the interval in question in the same relative aspect in which God views it—the very first thing for which the Expositor of Prophecy should consult.

III. Whereas, I had contended, in reply to Mr. Birks' allegation of the unprofitableness of the Apocalypse, on my view, that it might yet vindicate its character as Prophecy, even if it had not done so already; but that on Mr. Elliott's view, the time for this is irrevocably past, Mr. Birks now appears to return to the charge, but in reality takes up another position altogether; viz., that to require the Apocalypse thus to vindicate its character as Prophecy, is utterly unreasonable. Surely this mode of discussion is not satisfactory, first to

retaliate upon me, that the Futurist system fails in the test that I have alleged, thus seeming to admit its applicability to the subject; and then, when the simple answer to this is furnished, to take no notice of it, but affirm such test to be altogether impracticable. Let me examine, however, how Mr. B. comes to this conclusion. His argument is as follows:—

“We both admit, as an undoubted truth, that the book is a Divine prophecy. Hence, it follows inevitably, that it was either fulfilled long ago, or has been fulfilling through successive ages, or relates to events still future. On the first, or Preterist view, any extensive and lasting use, as mere warning, is plainly impossible. Hence, if it were proved that it has had no extensive and lasting use, as warning to the Church at large, on either of the two other systems, this cannot prove them to be alike erroneous, but only that the principle itself is unsound and inapplicable as a real test, in the case of this prophecy.”

Of the above extract, the first proposition—that the Apocalypse must be interpreted in one of three ways, is sufficiently plain, and I assent to it. But, what follows, I submit, is both ambiguous, and as far as it is intelligible, out of place. For, who is to determine what constitutes an *extensive and lasting use of Prophecy* as mere warning? Yea, who are we that we should judge how long it behoves a Prophecy to remain unfulfilled in order to this end? Most certainly I have not pretended that the Church has any such prerogative. All that I have urged is that for some duration or other, warning beforehand is the precise design of prophecy. If it have operated at all in this way, it matters not, according to my humble view, how soon after its

promulgation, it purports to be fulfilled; and so any interpretation that is advanced answering to this condition, I can legitimately entertain. But where this is wanting, as in Mr. Elliott's *Horæ Apocalypticæ*, there is *primâ facie* evidence, I contend, against any interpretation, come from what quarter it may.

Thus then, it was *not* "plainly impossible," as Mr. Birks alleges, for the Apocalypse to have vindicated its use as prophecy on the first or Preterist view, or indeed, on any view which he has specified. The simple question is, has it done so? And it suffices me, in regard to Mr. Elliott's system, to observe that he even claims for it nothing of this kind, but admits:—1st, touching THE SEALS, that the establishment of Christianity upon the ruins of Paganism, (the fulfilment of such series of Prophecy, according to him,) was an event, "*the contingency of which had never occurred*" to the early Christians; and 2ndly, touching THE TRUMPETS, that the anticipation of their import was "*in total contrast*" with his *ex post facto* discoveries. Surely these are virtual admissions, that, according to Mr. Elliott, these great integral parts of the Apocalypse have not served the purpose of warning as unfulfilled prophecy.

But now, to apply this test to the Futurist view, I repeat, if, according to it, the Apocalypse has not proved serviceable as Prophecy in times past, *there is still space for it to do so*. And when I think of the many children of God whose eyes have been opened of late, on the subject, I cannot but regard such vindication of this precious portion of the Word as

being at hand. At all events, this *may be* the issue; and thus a sufficient reply to Mr. Birks' retaliatory charge is taken from the possible future. But, is it not remarkable that, of this reply, which had been distinctly given in my first letter, Mr. Birks altogether omits notice in his rejoinders, and attributes to me instead, the following *travesty* of my sentiments by way of paraphrase :—

“If all the Church had held my view of the Prophecy, and my construction of the title, (a construction demonstrably untrue,) they would all have profited by it as a warning of things still to come. Since my view is right, it is probable, though no evidence remains of the fact, that simple-minded believers in every age, did embrace it. Hence it satisfies the test of practical and proved utility, as warning far better than the usual systems.”

Of course, having framed for me such an inadequate reply, Mr. B., after his manner, concludes with a flourish :— “The value of such a defence may be safely left to the judgment of your readers.” But, I put it to the same court of appeal, has my brother, on this occasion, “striven lawfully” for a verdict?

Desirous as I am of confining the controversy as much as possible to the *principles* at issue between Mr. Birks and myself, it will be observed that in the foregoing remarks, I have not cared to contend for the fact of the early Fathers' interpretation of the Apocalypse, harmonizing, in the main, with that of the Futurists. But as Mr. B. admits the existence of a partial resemblance between the two, I cannot forbear noticing how he endeavours to neutralize the

value of the fact, by his argument that "the time anticipated was widely different," inasmuch as the early Fathers looked for the events in question to occur so much earlier :—

"If I expect," says Mr. B., "an army of horsemen from the Euphrates within ten years, and such an army appears only after a thousand years have expired, the expectation is far less practically useful, than if they had come at the expected time, though from the most opposite point of the compass, and with a change in every particular of their martial equipage."

To this, I reply, that to suit the case in hand, Mr. Birks' comparison needs amendment. It should run thus :—"If I expect an army of horsemen from the Euphrates as *an imminent event* that may happen within the period of my life-time, and it appears only after a thousand years," &c. And, this being the hypothesis, I ask how has the practical usefulness of the expectation been lost, *if it has really led me to watching for evil from the Euphrates?* On the other hand, if no such army ever appear from the Euphrates, but one eventually from "the most opposite point of the compass," shall not all my watching, and that of intervening generations, although manifestly in accordance with the prediction, have been fraught with a mischievous tendency, as being exercised in a wrong direction? And such is really the deceptive operation which Mr. Birks' system of interpretation assigns to the use of the Apocalypse in early times. In the same strain, Mr. B. continues :—

"If an almanac-maker predicts rain to-morrow, and claims

to be a useful prophet, because, although the day is fine, it rains on the same day in the year following, who would not laugh his pretensions to scorn?"

Here a transition is made, rather confusingly, from the matter in hand, the practical effect of a given prophecy, to the character of genuineness or imposture which the event stamps on the Author. But keeping to the simple point before us, and again mending Mr. B.'s illustration to make it suit, I enquire if—not the almanac-maker, but the husbandman, trusting the almanac-maker, or rather the God of Providence,—surely expects the seasonable descent of rain on his fields, will he not, animated hereby, labour on until the end?—and thus, however the blessing be protracted, will it not have been good for him to have waited upon God? Now, similar to this, according to the Futurist system of interpretation, should be regarded the legitimate bearing of the Apocalypse on successive generations from the beginning. In it was revealed, as impending, "THE DAY OF THE LORD," that day in which, judgment being to come upon the matured evil of Jew and Gentile, its light was reflected upon the whole period of this dispensation—detecting and exposing to the eye of faith the elements of such evil, viz., the mystery of iniquity continuously working from the Apostles' days. Whether proximate or remote, as to the actual decree of God, the contemplation, as contingent, of the consummating events of the Apocalypse, might obviously be thus beneficial to every generation of the Church. That it was so in the case of the early

Fathers adverted to, who recognized these things as at the doors, may not be doubted. If any of them rashly and unwarrantably went beyond this, and committed their hopes to a precise date in their own day, they were, of course, chastised by the recoil of disappointment—as may happen to parties similarly erring now. But, surely, it will not be contended by Mr. Birks, that to have gone to the other extreme and set the events of the Apocalypse at the far off future, or, at least, beyond their times, as Mr. Birks' view would make it right for them to have done, would have been the way to have rendered the book useful and admonitory! On the contrary, is it not plain, that this course would have tended to banish from their minds all sense of personal concern in the subject; inasmuch as thus the “things to come” could only affect succeeding and remote generations. Hence, I again submit that the Futurist mode of interpretation, not misrepresented, but *rightly understood*, is that which maintains for the Apocalypse in all ages, its usefulness as prophecy. The admissions of Mr. Elliott, already cited, to the effect that his alleged fulfilments were not anticipated by the Church, but the contrary, may be very inconvenient to his defender. And I should not wonder, if, in a future edition of the *Horæ*, they are withdrawn. Meanwhile I must beg to hold Mr. B. to the *littera scripta* of his friend, nor can I accept his (Mr. B.'s) unauthorized modifications of the matter. Indeed they are so indefinite, I can scarcely apprehend their force.

IV. But besides appealing generally to Mr. Elliott's

admissions, I had urged in particular, that, according to his interpretation, the eleventh chapter of the Apocalypse must be considered to have been barren as prophecy ; inasmuch as even the Reformers, whose career Mr. E. finds so vividly depicted there, under the head of the two Witnesses, appear not to have made the animating discovery. Hereupon Mr. Birks writes :—

“ I utterly deny that Rev. xi. has been barren as prophecy, when referred to the Reformation, and I deny it on the strength of an examination of both earlier and later expositions of wide currency in the Church. In fact, at the time of the Reformation itself, that view was perhaps the most usual in the Reformed Churches.”

Now, far be it from me to question the sincerity or the strength of Mr. Birks' conviction that he has authority on his side for this emphatic disclaimer. But if he means to affirm that he has seen expositions, or even incidental interpretations of the Apocalypse, of *a date prior to the Reformation*, wherein the eleventh chapter is treated as rehearsing the eventful experience of the Reformers, I think it would have been satisfactory to his readers to have had the reference given ; nor, under the circumstances, was less explicitness due from Mr. B. For, I had called his attention to the fact of Luther's rejecting the Apocalypse from the canon of Scripture, and of Calvin's declining to give a Commentary on it ; and certainly this was not indicative of these servants of God therein discerning the course and issue of their arduous labours traced beforehand by the Holy Ghost. I confess, however, my strong conviction, that, notwithstanding Mr. B. affirms that I “ reason in the

teeth of facts on the other side," he really has nothing of this kind to adduce; and that it will turn out his reliance is on Authors who have written *since the Reformation*. If so, the contradiction which he has given to my position will, with all intelligent readers, go for nought, and I must marvel at his inadvertence in urging it.

V. It will be remembered, by our readers, that Mr. Birks having charged the Futurist scheme of interpretation with rendering the Apocalypse useless to former generations, for that they never applied it to such events as that scheme supposes, I had, hereupon, appealed to him touching his own premillennial expositions of Scripture, such as Isaiah ii. 2, that they might be similarly condemned; inasmuch as, for so many ages, these Scriptures were never regarded in that light, but taken to refer to the prosperity of the Christian Church under the present dispensation; and I besought him to forbear employing against his brethren such mere clamour of traditional authority which he would not admit against himself. Now how does Mr. B. reply to this appeal? By asserting that his interpretation of the passage specified, (Isa. ii. 2) is inclusive of the long prevailing application of it to the Christian Church; and therefore, that to the majority of Christians who so regarded it, it cannot be said to have had no prophetic utility. But without stopping to remark the utter inconsistency of a Premillennarian like Mr. Birks professing to find the course of our dispensation, which is to end in apostacy and judgment, comprised under a

prophecy which only speaks of the progressive triumph of the truth, it is enough for me to observe that here is Mr. Birks' admission that but for this double interpretation, my retort against his argument would be just. Accordingly, be it known to all your premillennial readers, that unless they believe with Mr. B., that Isaiah ii. 2, besides its literal reference to the future glory of the Jewish nation, contains also a figurative prediction of the spread of the Gospel now, (a view which, I maintain, no ingenuity can make even plausible,) they are guilty, according to Mr. B., of defaming this prophecy, as worse than useless for seventeen centuries—"it has bred nothing but false expectations!"* But now to fasten my retort upon Mr. B. so that even with his elasticity of interpretation of this passage, he cannot evade it, may I not enquire, is there *any* prophecy of which he admits his modern and premillennial exposition is inconsistent with the notions heretofore attached to it by the professing Church? If there be,—and I suppose he will not contend against this,—then is it not plain, *according to his dictum*, that such prophecy has been, to the generations in question, an *ignis fatuus*, instead of the "beacon light" which God intended it to be.

The fact is, the tendency of Mr. Birks' reasoning is not only suicidal, but explosive of all progress in the knowledge of Scripture. For, every discovery of truth may be met with a similar reproach, that former gene-

* See Mr. Birks' original article, *Quarterly Journal of Prophecy*, page 39.

rations of Christians understood the matter differently, and that to admit the new view would be to tax the Scripture adduced, with misleading the many who have gone before us. I do trust Mr. Birks will see the vanity of this line of argument.

VI. It will be familiar to our readers that to my illustration of the mischief of building on mere hypothesis, taken from the Ptolemaic system of astronomy, Mr. Birks having excepted that such system was, "in its own day, the ripest fruit of inductive enquiry," I rejoined that however such proposition, equivalent in its literal exactness, to *anything being the superlative of nothing*, might be maintained, yet,—that the Ptolemaic system was not the fruit of inductive enquiry at all, but of an erroneous hypothesis, (namely, that the earth was the centre of the planetary system,)—was plain from the fact that inductive inquiry put an end to it. There is nothing in this, I need scarcely say, that is not popularly known to every school-boy; and in pleading it, I made no pretensions to any depth of astronomical knowledge. Would it not then have been more seemly in Mr. B. to have cleared up his remarks, if obscure, which called for this plain elementary statement, than to have flown off to a surmise about my superficial acquaintance with the subject, and a recommendation that I should read Professor Whewell's "History of the Inductive Sciences." And yet, this is the course pursued by Mr. Birks. It would be easy to enlarge upon the spirit thus displayed; but I forbear. The irrelevancy of the matter is what I care to notice.

VII. The next thing to which I have to call attention, is the charge of "*gross misrepresentation*" and "*manifest error*," (certainly, hard words) which Mr. B. is pleased to urge against me, for alleging that Mr. Elliott's exposition is built upon hypothesis. Although I have quoted Mr. E's. own admission to this effect, I am guilty of the former. And because I say that his disposal, in an appendix to his second edition, of rival systems of interpretation, is no proof of his own being (not true, for this was not the point, but) properly and inductively pursued,—I am guilty of the latter. Now what are the strong reasons, as they ought to be, by which Mr. B. supports these assertions?

(1.) As to the charge of *misrepresentation*, it resolves itself into my production of "*garbled evidence*," on which he writes as follows :—

"How then did Mr. Kelly overlook, or why conceal the fact that the three first pages (of Mr. Elliott's preface) are employed in stating his prolonged enquiry on this very subject, the relative truth of the Protestant and Futurist schemes, and his deepened conviction, the result of that enquiry, in favor of the view on which his work is based, with two or three reasons that appear to him decisive in its favor, the words of Rev. iv. 1, and the prophecy of Babylon, with its explanation."

I observe, in reply, that I did not overlook these statements of Mr. Elliott, rehearsed by his friend; but I did not see, nor do I now, that they were intended by Mr. Elliott as the *substratum* of his presumption that the Apocalypse treated of the fortunes of the Roman Empire, from the time of John onward.

They occur not even in the same connexion. Nay, further, what Mr. Elliott deduced from them was, simply, "that there must have taken place some more exact fulfilment, in accordance with the year-day principle, of those Apocalyptic Prophecies against the Protestant interpretation of which, previously offered, exception had justly been made."* Thus, Mr. E. recounts how he was led to embark in the construction of a new exposition of the book, and this is intelligible enough. But he says nothing of what suggested to him the presumptions I have called in question. If he had, I should not have failed to quote it.

(2.) My "*manifest error*" I now come to consider; and wherein does it lie? In my argument that Mr. Elliott's showing other systems of Apocalyptic interpretation to be faulty is not equivalent, as Mr. Birks contended, to the justification of his aforesaid hypothesis:—

"Mr. Elliott," writes Mr. B., "is not reasoning with Infidels, but with Christians, who believe that the work is an inspired prophecy. Now, in this case, only three alternatives are possible, however each may be varied in the specific details: that the prophecy was fulfilled soon after it was given, that it has been fulfilling or fulfilled in the long course of intervening ages, or that its fulfilment is still future. If two of these views are disproved, the third is so far plainly established, unless we can believe a work to be an inspired prophecy which neither has been, nor ever will be, fulfilled."

Here, I would say, is not "*manifest*" but rather *latent* error on the part of Mr. Birks. He assumes that Mr. Elliott, in his Appendix, has dealt with the

* Original Preface to the *Horæ Apocalypticæ*.

principles of the two rival systems of interpretation opposed to him; in which case, I admit, it would be consistent to argue from the negation of them to the affirmation of his own. But this assumption is a mistake. They are the *details* of the rival systems, at least of the Futurist one, not its essential principles which Mr. E. has aimed at proving defective; and it is obvious, success here does not leave *his* principle to be the necessary alternative. All his exceptions that have any force may be admitted, and yet a *Futurist system of interpretation* be the true one. Nay, further, even if it were admitted that Mr. E. had, in his Appendix, disproved all other principles of interpretation, it would not hence follow that he had legitimately plied his own, and abstained from the employment of gratuitous hypotheses, which is my objection.

VIII. Mr. Birks' original attempt to meet this objection consisted in the following assertion:—"Whoever objects to them (*i. e.* Mr. E's presumptions) must be prepared to maintain either that there is no principle of wise selection in the Divine prophecies; or, that it consists with the Divine wisdom to predict trifling changes rather than the more important." To this I replied that we were not competent to determine beforehand what would constitute a wise selection of events for the roll of prophecy; and that from the contradiction of fact to human estimation of the important, in Scripture *history*, we ought to apprehend our surely falling into error if we indulged this *à priori* spirit of speculation in regard to the matter of *prophecy*. I ventured also to

remind Mr. B. of Bishop Butler's exposure of this line of reasoning, as adopted by the Infidel against revelation in general. Hereupon, Mr. Birks maintains that this "*is a tacit admission of the truth of the impugned maxims.*" I ask what maxims? Surely not Mr. Elliott's hypotheses, which Mr. B. dignifies with this name. From the discussion of these in themselves, I had turned to Mr. B's defence of them; and therefore the only maxim that I have allowed by implication, in my adoption of Bishop Butler's argument, is Mr. Birks' own, that *there is a wise selection of events in prophecy.* And now, maintaining this, which I do equally with Mr. Birks, what is the difference between us, but that he claims to decide beforehand what would be the wise selection for God to make; while I think it the more becoming course to believe in the Divine wisdom at once, and then reverently to seek to appreciate it by actual examination. Nor can I admit that I have at all misunderstood or misstated Bishop Butler's argument. Indeed it is so plain on this particular point, that the humblest reader may recognize it.

But Mr. B. objects that an argument suitable to silence an Infidel, may, when addressed to a Christian, "be worthless in the extreme," and applying this to my use of Bishop Butler, he says it is assumed by me that "A Christian searching the word of God with humility and prayer, may be as void of spiritual discernment as an Infidel who is inventing reasons for rejecting it."

Now the exaggeration of Mr. Birks here is too plain to require notice. But, that the child of God,

as well as the natural man, *may* go out of his province, and sit in judgment upon what it behoved God to do, however to be lamented, is not to be deemed incredible, and this is just what has happened in the present case, I conceive, to call for my humble admonition. The Infidel arrogates to himself to determine what the character of revelation, in general, ought to be; forgetful of his proved incompetency, from the events of creation and providence, to indulge in any preconceived surmise on the subject. Mr. Birks and his friend have similarly erred when—coming to the study of the Apocalypse, and, overlooking the disappointing contents, to human conjecture of the other Scriptures—they have presumed that such portion of the word, as a wise selection of events, must be supposed to foretel the fortunes of the Roman Empire, &c. We remind the Infidel of what obtains in *the constitution and course of nature*; this silences him. I remind Mr. Birks and his friends of the analogy of *the Bible at large*; and why should not this similarly avail with them? Had he not himself admonished one of his opponents to the same effect:—“it is dangerous for Christian Divines to borrow their shafts against an obnoxious theory from the armoury of Infidels.”*

IX. But I did not content myself with negating Mr. Elliott's gratuitous hypotheses, I endeavoured to gather from the analogy of Scripture those that were legitimate. And this brings me to what is really the grave question in this discussion. Does Prophecy, in

* Elements of Prophecy.

the Old Testament, which, it is admitted, reaches beyond the present dispensation, take in the political revolutions of Christendom? Does it even more than imply, (and that, by providing room for it) the work of grace that is now going on in the calling of the Church? If these questions can only be answered in the negative; in other words, if Old Testament prophecy which has been fulfilled, and which remains to be fulfilled, that is, (as I had said, in one word, for the sake of brevity, though it appears unintelligibly to Mr. Birks,) if Old Testament prophecy *still* circles round the Jews as a nation, overleaping all details of the interval between the advents, why should it be presumed to be different with New Testament prophecy? These premises I have endeavoured to argue out against Mr. B.'s objections. On which side the truth lies, our readers must judge. But I am persuaded the root of the matter is here; and I regret that Mr. B. has perplexed it by his method of reply, which is forcible only because it is indiscriminating. Thus, at my remark, that "of those political revolutions of the earth, which Gibbon and other historians have chosen to record, Old Testament prophecy is utterly unobservant," Mr. Birks exclaims, "*an assertion truly prodigious;*" meaning, I suppose, to impute to me the denial of the ruin of the ancient seats of empire in the East, being in accordance with the Divine predictions. But though I believe there is much exaggeration in the coincidences commonly adduced under this head by our evidence writers, just because the predictions in question yet await

their complete fulfilment, Mr. Birks should have observed that I withheld the character of accomplished prophecy not from these events, but, as I expressly stated, from those constituting "*the history of Christendom*"—I had even specified, in my pamphlet,—“the invasion by the Goths and Saracens, &c. ;” and I have yet to learn that the rehearsal of such matters, in Old Testament prophecy, is even maintained by Messrs. Birks, Elliott, or any other writer. Now that my true position is discerned, as I trust it will be, by Mr. B., he will see how completely beside the mark, have been all his brandishings against me, of “the conviction of the Church in all ages—the plainest maxims of criticism—and the clear facts of history.”

X. Another specimen of inadvertence in Mr. Birks' is to be found in the maintenance of his analogy between Israel and the Church, as centres of prophetic information. He had said that the reason why the earlier prophecies all circled round the people of Israel was, that they were the covenant people of God, adding ;—

“Ever since the days of John, the Jews have not been the people of the covenant ; but the privilege has been transferred to the visible Church among the Gentiles.”

To this I replied that long before Israel had acquired nationality, they constituted the fruitful centre of prophecy ; and that the same was the case, now that they were disorganized as a nation. Hereby I desired to impress upon the reader's mind, and upon Mr. Birks, if he would let me, that Israel's being nationally recognized of God, was not necessary, as he appeared

to assume, to their being the radiating centre of prophecy. Mr. B. now rejoins that I have "*replaced his statement by another, and then argue against a shadow of my own devising.*" But how am I chargeable with this? Because it appears, I have understood his term, "the people of the covenant," as equivalent to Israel's national recognition by God; whereas, this latter,—"*their nationality,*"—he observes, "began in Egypt, or at the Exodus;" but the *covenant* began when the words were uttered:—"I will be a God to thee, and to thy seed after thee." This I admit, looks like accuracy, but what is the purport of it? Admitting that the covenant with Abraham preceded the actual nationality of Israel, is it of *the covenant, simply*, that Mr. Birks had been speaking, and not rather of the organized nation? For, observe Mr. B.'s words: "*so long as they remained the people of the covenant.*" This language, it is obvious, implies that, in the sense in which Mr. B. uses it, Israel are not *now* the people of the covenant. But Mr. B. holds, I believe as fully as I do, that in regard to the purpose of God, they have never ceased to be such. Therefore, the only thing to which he can be supposed to refer, is their non-recognition as the people of the covenant, *i. e.*, as I have said, their present disorganization as a nation.

Thus, it is manifest, I have not misrepresented Mr. Birks' proposition, but he has made a distinction without a difference. And my argument is just the same whichever expression is employed. I here restate it for the satisfaction of our readers, using Mr. B.'s own terms. 'Prophecy circled round Israel, not only as

“*long* as they remained the people of the covenant,” but before they were a people at all. And now that they are not the people of the covenant, *i.e.*, not recognized of God,—prophecy still circles around them.’ Hence it is an assumption of Mr. B. to lay it down that because of their actual condition as God’s covenant people, Israel were the centre of prophetic revelations concerning the earth; and it is of course, inconclusive to argue from this that the Church being now owned of God, they must occupy the same prophetic relation. The fact is, Israel’s calling to precedence *in the earth*, and their progress to their inheritance, involving *earthly* details—peculiarities not obtaining in the Church’s case,—have been overlooked by Mr. Birks. Hence his impatience at my disallowance of his analogy.

XI. Mr. Birks is also very impatient at my affirming that “the Church’s relation to the world is not direct, but through the intermediate link of restored Israel;” which proposition he has chosen to regard as denying to believers now *an influence on society around them*. But Mr. B. will excuse me for saying, I denied no such thing; and if he will look again, he will see that my reference was to the Divine dealings with *the nations of the earth, as such*. And that they are reserved, as the sphere for *Israel’s* agency, in the latter day—even as, by *Israel*, their conversion is, at last, to be effected to the faith of Christ—is not, I presume, questioned by Mr. Birks. On the other hand, the election which is now going on—a secret process—with all its parallel influences which are assignable, is compatible with any

variety of phases, which the nations may assume. Accordingly, admitting, in a general sense, the comparison which Mr. B. adduces, that "what the soul is in the body, that are Christians in the world," I ask, does not such comparison properly belong to the case of Israel organized as a kingdom, in the midst of the nations of the earth—the event which will constitute the remarkable period as our Lord calls it of the REGENERATION. Matt. xix. 28.

XII. I now hasten to the elucidation of the texts of Scripture on which Mr. Birks and I are at issue.

(1.) And first in regard to 1 Peter i. 11, which I conceive is all important as reconciling other apparently conflicting passages. I shall put it, and them, into juxta-position, as the most satisfactory to the reader.

APPARENT CONTRADICTIONS.

"The Gospel of God which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy Scriptures." Romans i. 1, 2.

"Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which now is made manifest, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith."

Rom. xvi. 25, 26.

HARMONIZING EXPLANATIONS.

"Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you ; searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow, unto whom it was revealed that not unto themselves but unto us they did minister the things which are now reported unto you." 1 Peter i. 11, 12.

APPARENT CONTRADICTIONS.

"The mystery which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God."

Eph. iii. 9.

"The mystery of Christ which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit."

Eph. iii. 4, 5.

"The mystery which hath been hid from ages and generations, but now is made manifest to his saints."

Col. i. 26.

From the first of the foregoing columnus, it appears that Old Testament Prophecy includes *some* reference to our dispensation. From the third it is equally plain that until the ministry of Paul commenced, our dispensation was hidden—not made known. What is the harmonizing explanation of these two propositions? The middle column, as I have said, supplies it, and in this way—telling us that the Spirit of Christ, in the Old Testament Prophets, testified beforehand of the great themes—the *Christward sufferings* and the *glories afterwards*; the former, as well as the latter, including what was to happen to ISRAEL. Our dispensation lay between in an undefined interval, and *what time and what manner of time* it was to be, the Prophets exercised themselves to discern; but it sufficed with God to reveal to them that this was a matter to be developed only in our day; and that it was not for them to penetrate into it. But, how, it may be asked, in this case, did they “*prophecy of the grace that should come to us,*” and “*minister the things reported to us?*” This question I had anticipated in my pamphlet to the effect that they handed down to us, so to speak, “the seed-plot of our dispensation; but the precious seed itself to be sown therein, or rather already deposited, only destined to lie inorganic till the due season of Messiah’s rejection by ‘his own’ would arrive, this—they did not, they could not recognize.” Again, I had said that in the sufferings and glories of which the Prophets testified, involving the fall and rising again of their own people, they perceived the boundaries of our dispensation, and were anxious to

discern the filling up. But this was reserved for another time, and for a special ministry; even that of Paul “made a minister to *fulfil* (πληρωσαι) the word of God, even the mystery hid from ages and from generations, but now made manifest to his saints.” Col. i. 25, 26.

With this comparison of Scripture with Scripture, I should be quite satisfied to leave the subject to the judgment of the reader; but that Mr. Birks reproaches me for not replying to the objection on this point urged in his original article. I proceed therefore to supply the omission, and it is easily done without going beyond Mr. B’s own premises. “The sufferings and the glories,” he contends, are not two chronological limits, “*but the reverse.*” For, he proceeds:—

“The glory of our Lord, as he himself expounds to his disciples, Luke xxiv., followed at once upon his sufferings. The sufferings of his members, which also pertain to him, continue long after his glory has begun.”

Is not this an admission, in so many words, I ask, of the very position Mr. B. denies? For, thus the Christward sufferings still continue, and only *the personal glory* of our Lord has begun, that is, “*the glories*” have not yet set in. But bring into view, what my argument required, and Mr. B. has not ventured to contradict, that in the sufferings and glories in question, *Israel’s* blindness and restoration are included, and the propriety of regarding the same as comprehensive boundaries, between which our dispensation runs its course, is at once obvious. The fact is, by substituting

glory for glories, and excluding *Israel's*, Mr. B. has obscured the argument he was opposing, even to himself.

(2.) As to Isaiah xlix. 6, Mr. B. says:—

“The Apostles quote it distinctly as a command of God, that they should preach the Gospel there and then to the Gentiles.” Acts xiii. 47.

Therefore, I add, it is plain that they intended not to *interpret* the passage, but merely to state what it implied. For, it is remarkable, the interpretation is not a *command* at all, but a promise to Messiah. Mr. Birks may say that to the extension of the Divine favor to the Gentiles as such, the Jews of Antioch who contradicted and blasphemed would not have objected. But I refer him to Peter, who, without the overruling instruction of a special vision would not have communicated the Gospel to Cornelius and his company; and this was not the broaching to them the mystery of our dispensation, but simply the proclamation “unto the Gentiles of repentance unto life,” such as the Gentiles at large will yet enjoy when our dispensation is over, and the Jewish nation restored. See Acts xi. 18. If the clear revelation of an event in the Scriptures, is to make it incredible that parties should stumble at it, as Mr. B. argues, then is it incredible that the Jews were offended at Messiah’s advent in humiliation, for what could be more clearly revealed than this?

(3.) On Deut. xxxii. 21, and Isaiah lxxv. 1, I must leave what has been said between us to the judgment of our readers, only I must remark I am surprised at Mr. B’s dismissing the matter as he has done, with

meagre assertions which are no more satisfactory on the subject than are the common headings of the chapters in our Bibles on any matter of controversy.

(4.) In addition to what I have already said upon Matt. xxi. 43, I would submit that the nation in question bringing forth the fruits of righteousness, is the same as "the righteous nation which keepeth the truth," referred to in Isaiah xxvi. 2; and both passages agree with Exodus xix. 6, which clearly relates to the people of Israel. The text Mr. Birks adduces, 1 Peter ii. 9, is only an *application* of the latter to Christians, which, of course, ought not to interfere with its strict *interpretation*.

(5.) I am sorry to observe that my argument from Acts i. 6, is still misapprehended by Mr. B. And yet I can conceive nothing simpler. But, let me again put it. Our Lord had been interrogated, after his resurrection, as to whether he would then restore again the kingdom to Israel. Whereupon he replies:—"It is not for you to know the times and the seasons which the Father hath put in his own power." Hence, I inferred that knowledge of the times and seasons has to do with the recognition of the matter of Jewish hope. As I observed in my last, having in view the *mere question* which might have emanated from any quarter, "whom they, (the enquiring disciples,) represented, concerned not my argument." I should have thought this very obvious. But no,—Mr. B. will have it, in spite of all I say, that my argument "*rests upon the secret assumption that the Apostles here represent*

the Gentile Church in contrast to the Jews." Now, whence this insensibility to my disclaimer? I will tell the reader. It arises not from any pertinacity of imputation on the part of Mr. B., but (though it ought not to be left for me to make the explanation for him) from his interpolation into my premises of a counter argument of his own. I had argued, I repeat, simply from the subject matter of the question, and our Lord's reply. Mr. Birks argues, it appears, from the representative character of the questioners. But how at length have I discovered this? By a very slight clue indeed—nothing more than Mr. B's quietly putting an emphasis by means of italics upon one word:—It is not for *you* to know the times and the seasons." Herein lies his counter-argument, at least, his principal premise.

Having traced it to him, let me now inquire how it avails against my position. And to this end, I admit at once, what Mr. B. thinks must give him a triumph, that in the dialogue in question, our Lord's disciples represented—as they really were—a Jewish remnant. What then is the legitimate conclusion? Why simply this, that it was not for them to know what was not yet revealed by the Father. But it is obvious, from our Lord's words, that when, if ever, such revelation were made, it would consist of information concerning the times and the seasons; that is, that the recognition of the great crisis of Jewish hope (the restoration of the kingdom of Israel) would be associated with knowledge of this kind. Mr. Birks seems to apprehend our Lord's answer to the disciples as importing that, for the

satisfaction of their inquisitiveness about the kingdom, they *needed not* to know the times and the seasons. Whereas, it only conveyed the fact that such knowledge was *reserved* from them. My view, also, as given on the same page of my pamphlet, which Mr. B. quotes, was, that this reservation extended to the case of our Lord Himself, prior to His ascension, (His Christ relation only then receiving its full development,) after which, in the Apocalypse, he disclosed this very knowledge through the Apostle John. Compare Mark xiii. 32, with Rev. i. 1. Thus, though I disclaim the position imputed to me by Mr. Birks, that *the disciples represented the whole Gentile Church*, and believe with him, (if, indeed, he does believe it.) that they represented, what they were, a Jewish remnant, my argument is not “reduced to ashes,” but comes out the brighter, I think, from the discussion.

(6.) My interpretation of Gal. i. 11—17, is objected to by Mr. Birks. I proceed to vindicate it. The chief proposition of my argument is, that when the Apostle states that he received the Gospel which he taught, “not of man, but by the Revelation of Jesus Christ,” he refers to a Personal appearance of our Lord, to him, subsequent to that at his conversion, when “it pleased God to reveal his Son in him.” Mr. Birks maintains that the Apostle refers only to the latter.

[1. I reply, that on Mr. B.’s view, the Apostle’s statement would be incorrect. For, admitting that what passed at the miraculous scene of his conversion shows him to have been directly commissioned as an Apostle ;

yet, from none of the recitals of it, does it appear that the *matter* of his teaching was then communicated to him. The narrative of Luke is as follows:—"Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise and go into the city and it shall be told thee what thou must do." Acts ix. 6. To the same effect the dialogue is given by Paul himself:—"What shall I do, Lord? And the Lord said unto me, Arise, and go into Damascus; and there it shall be told thee of all things which are appointed for thee to do." Acts xxii. 10. And so Ananias was presently employed to enjoin generally upon the Apostle that he should bear witness unto all men of what he had "seen and heard;" *i. e.*, what had just transpired, *the vision of Jesus, and the words which He spake*. Thus even the admission that Paul received his apostolic commission on the occasion of his conversion, can only be justified by taking into account the supplementary communication of Ananias.

[2. But when we turn to the remaining version of the transaction in chap. xxvi., which obviously embodies Ananias' message with the vision itself, the evidence is *positive* in favor of another vision, or visions, being yet in reserve to qualify the Apostle for his mission; for, the language runs thus: "I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest, but rise, and stand upon thy feet; for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of those things which thou hast seen, *and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee*." Ver. 15, 16. Here is clear intimation that to furnish the Apostle for the

work before him, he was to enjoy a subsequent vision, or visions, of his Lord. If then, as we have seen, his appeal to what transpired at his conversion *would not be conclusive* as evidence of his gospel which he preached not being taught him by man, why should we not understand that appeal as extending to *what would be conclusive*,—the Lord's promised appearance to him afterwards.

[3. But, again : of his account of the institution of the Lord's supper, (Cor. xi. 23.) the Apostle said that he "*received it of the Lord.*" Now does Mr. Birks connect the acquisition of this knowledge with what obtained at the Apostle's conversion, or even at his interview with Ananias? I presume not. And yet, this was a subject which Ananias, as a disciple, was of course acquainted with. But was such the character of that gospel to which the Apostle alludes in the passage before us, as having been taught him "BY THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST?" Let his own recital of it as that which he was specially called to preach, answer to the question : "a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me, for you to fulfil the word of God ; even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and generations, but now is made manifest to his saints : to whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles ; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory." Col. i. 25—27. Here is a gospel the characteristic of which is — not Messiah or Christ reigning *over* Jew and Gentile, but—"Christ *in* you,

the hope of glory;" betokening the intimate relation which exists between the Church and her glorious Head as one body. Was it a matter of course, then, for the Apostle, as a converted Jew of those days, to know this? Could it even have been communicated to him by Ananias?—Such notion is, at once, contradicted by the double fact that to Paul the mystery was first divulged, and that for him to impart it to his brother Apostles afterwards needed considerable caution. For thus, in the very context of the passage before us, and to which Mr. Birks ought to have extended his quotation, the Apostle relates: "Then fourteen years after I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and I went up by revelation and communicated unto them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but *privately to them which were of reputation*, lest by any means I should run, or had run in vain. Gal. ii. 1, 2. Does it not appear from this that there was such a peculiarity in the Gospel which Paul preached—and, doubtless, as calling from earthly associations altogether to heavenly glory—that at first, only select brethren, in the Church at Jerusalem, could bear to have it opened up to them? All this may seem a "novel paradox" to Mr. Birks, and opposed to "the great body of Divines," but, for my part, content to be still a learner, I call it only a little gleanings of adequate knowledge on the subject of the Apostle's allusion; and applying it accordingly, I am quite confirmed in the view, that, after Paul's conversion,

which he describes as a revelation of the Son of God *in* him, (ver 16.) he had a further revelation or appearing of Christ *to* him, (ver. 12.) by which he was initiated into the mystery of the calling of the Church under this dispensation.

That this latter Revelation, also, was enjoyed by him in *Arabia*, is highly probable, because of the close connexion in which follows the mention of his journey thither, whilst no such journey is recorded amongst his preaching expeditions in the Acts. Mr. B. says that I make St. Paul address to the Galatians this absurd proof of his Divine commission: "I received not the Gospel of man, but by Divine revelation, for I went into Arabia; as if every one who went thither must of course receive a supernatural vision!" But here Mr. Birks confounds things that differ. The Galatians, and the Church of God since, had only Paul's assurance to rely on, touching the *fact* of his having been taught by the Revelation in question; but in giving this assurance, it was natural that he should incidentally notice the *place* of it, which is all I urge. From the way in which the Apostle denies his having gone, at once, to *Jerusalem*, we may gather his admission that such journey, had it been taken, might have suggested the notion of his gospel having been received from the other Apostles. But will Mr. Birks say that the Apostle hereby exposes himself to the reproach of a similar absurdity; namely, that every one who went to Jerusalem must of course have been instructed

to act the Apostle. On the other hand, may it not be fairly reasoned from the manifest antithesis, in the Apostle's recital, between the places *Jerusalem* and *Arabia*, that as the former was contemplated by him, as a *possible*,—it might be held the *probable*,—source of the ordinary Apostolic commission, which he *disclaims*, so the latter naturally comes in, as the real scene of the Lord's extraordinary Revelation to him, which he *affirms*.

(7.) I had used the foregoing case of St. Paul's receiving the revelation of Christ in Arabia, as analogous to John's receiving the Apocalypse in Patmos—and so I took the Apostle's prefatory statement (chap. i. 9) in its simple obvious meaning:—"I was in the isle called Patmos for, (*i. e.* in order to receiving,) the word of God, and the testimony of Jesus Christ." This view Mr. Birks utterly derides. But I maintain, with all deference to Mr. B's pleading and criticism, that if there be precedent at all, (and he now admits there is, though he before denied it,) for giving *δια* a prospective sense, there is no avoiding such construction in the present case.

[1 He is shut up to it by the import of the compound phrase, "the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ"—for it occurs in verse 2, and is there, without doubt, equivalent to "*the things which John saw*"—the visions of this book. Thus we have the Spirit's own explanation of these words, and I cannot suffer Mr. Birks capriciously to change their meaning in verse 9.

[2. But what confirms the necessity of adhering to it, is the New Testament use of the latter substantive,

with a genitive annexed—"the testimony of Jesus"—whence it appears that the testimony of which he is the *Author* is intended; not that of which he is simply the *subject*. When the latter is intended, the dative, and not the genitive case, is employed. Various examples of this I adduced in my last letter. And of the counter-references on the strength of which Mr. Birks denies the uniformity of the rule, only one relates to the point, as specifying the substantive in question, *testimony*, (*μαρτυρία*); and such reference, Rev. xix. 10, is really no exception to my interpretation, for "the Spirit of prophecy" is the Spirit of Christ testifying in the Prophets, 1 Peter i. 11; and indeed, according to the original, the parts of the sentence may be inverted, and read thus, "the Spirit of prophecy is the testimony of Jesus."

[3. Again, in chap. xii. 17, we have "*the testimony of Jesus*"—the exact expression here—spoken of as a simple *possession*, and distinguished from that which constitutes one's own testimony in the way of faithfulness:—"The remnant of the Woman's seed *keep* (*τηρεω*) the commandment of God," but they "*have* (*εχω*) the testimony of Jesus." What must be the testimony which admits of this description, if not the visions of this book thus denominated, as we have seen in chap. i. 2?

Connecting all this evidence, then, gathered from the use of the terms severally, and combined, it is plain that "the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ," (ver. 9,) means, as already stated, the things

which John saw, and which are rehearsed in this book. How, then, can he be apprehended to have been in Patmos, for, or, on account of these things, except in order to their being there disclosed to him? Certainly he could not have been banished to Patmos *because* of what he saw in Patmos. But, with the purport before us of Paul's journey to Arabia, we can easily conceive of his being there by the Divine appointment, that he might see and record the wondrous things here revealed. Thus, the exigency of the passage leaves us no alternative but to take the preposition ($\delta\iota\alpha$) prospectively; and if it were an anomaly in Greek grammar, we should only submit to it, as we do to other anomalies in this book. But we are not left to this, as I showed in my last letter. Nor has Mr. B. commended to me his counter-interpretations of the examples adduced. One, however, is sufficient to insist on. John xii. 30. "This voice came not for me, but for your sakes." And even through Mr. Birks' paraphrase, the prospective signification of $\delta\iota\alpha$ forces itself upon our recognition. 'This voice came, not because I needed a sign, but *because your faith was weak and needed confirmation.*' Let Mr. Birks' paraphrase, Rev. i. 9, similarly and I shall be satisfied.

As to Rev. vi. 9, and xx. 4, where we read of the martyrs slain for "the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ"—the same phrase—the causative sense of $\delta\iota\alpha$, in those texts, is not objected to, but admitted by me. Only the natural ellipsis, as I have supplied it, is that they were slain because of their

maintaining, or cleaving to the testimony in question, not for their mere "*reading*" it; and Mr. Birks might really have forborne this change of my words. The fact is, the preposition $\delta\iota\alpha$ as in the English *for*, has an aspect prospective and retrospective, which is sometimes determined by the first look at the sentence with which it is connected. And, I submit, the present is a case of this kind; for, knowing the active meaning of the "Word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ," we cannot help taking $\delta\iota\alpha$ prospectively in chap. i. 9; whilst, on the other hand, the one unmistakeable import of *slain* and *beheaded* in chap. vi. 9, and xx. 4, where $\delta\iota\alpha$ also occurs, obliges us to take it retrospectively.

(9.) As to the import of "*the Lord's day*," Mr. Birks still contends that it must be essentially different from that of "*the day of the Lord*." But after all, the only ground of difference is that the adjective form of the word, "Lord," is used, in the one case, and the substantive, in the other. Is it credible, I ask, that this trifling variation was designed of the Spirit to indicate such a change in the meaning of the phrase? With simple-minded readers, this reflection will certainly have weight, especially when they see in the Gospels that "the day when the Son of Man is revealed," (the very subject of the Apocalypse according to its title) and "His *day*" are used as convertible terms. See Luke xvii. 24, 26, 30. Thus, Mr. Birks must admit that, at least, the first blush of the argument is against him. What then are his countervailing allegations against it?

[1. To suppose John to be transported in spirit into a distant time, "involves an idea which finds not one precedent in Scripture, and is opposed to the constant law of prophetic revelation." I humbly submit that the very contrary is the truth. What Mr. Birks objects to is a grand characteristic of the prophetic visions of the Old Testament; and therein has been continually recognized by commentators as accounting for the use of the present tense, as in Isaiah ix. 6. x. 28—31. liii. 3—12. "The Prophet Isaiah," says Hengstenburg, *"so lives in the events he describes that the future becomes to him as the past and the present."* The following also are extracts from Bishop Horsley which have caught my eye on turning to his works: "This is the language of a man describing a scene lying before him." (On Isaiah chap. 1.) Again: "Here the Prophet suddenly inflamed, as it were, by the word 'remnant,' *rushes into distant times.*" Numerous remarks of the same kind occur, I will venture to say, in every writer on the subject of Prophetic inspiration. Thus, it is not incongruous to read Rev. i. 10, "*I was in spirit in the Lord's day.*" It is but the avowal more explicitly of what these learned writers attribute to the Prophets generally. For example, if Bishop Horsley were asked how he conceived that the Prophet Isaiah *rushed into distant times*," no doubt he would reply that it was *in spirit*, and *by the Spirit*. And does not the Prophet Ezekiel say the same thing substantially of himself, when he records: "*In the visions of God brought he me into the land of Israel.*" Ezek. xl. 2. Does not the Evangelist also

affirm it of Isaiah when he writes "*these things said Esaias when he saw his glory?*" Compare Isaiah vi. 1—5 with John xii. 41. Does not the Apostle Paul also speak of being present in spirit with the Corinthians whilst personally separated from them? "*I verily as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already.*" 1 Cor. v. 3. See also Col. ii. 5.

[2. But the evidence which effectually disposes of the opposition contended for between the Lord's day (Κυριακή ημέρα) and the day of the Lord, (ημέρα του Κυρίου) is that which I adduced from 1 Cor. iv. 3, where the analogous phrase, *man's day*, (Ανθρωπινή ημέρα) obviously equivalent to *the day of man*, is employed by the Spirit to denote the whole season of man's mis-judgment, until the Lord comes. Indeed, it is a remarkable fact that this latter identical phrase occurs in the Septuagint translation of Jeremiah, ch. xvii. 16, where the words are, in English, "neither have I desired *the day of man*." Our version is "*the woeful day*." But, besides that the original Hebrew, with a trifling variation in the stopping, admits of either meaning, that adopted by the Septuagint, I believe to be the genuine one, because more congruous with the sentiment that the Prophet utters. For, he seems to be contemplating the climax of wickedness in the latter times, when *man's day* will, as it were, reach its meridian ascendancy; and in connexion with his averment concerning himself,—“that which came out of my lips was right before thee,” (*i. e.* his speech was not arrogant or vain-glorious)—his disclaimer of the hope of

the Apostate is natural: "I have not desired *man's day*." Then follows the contemplation of the day of the Lord's judgment, which he calls in the two following verses "*the day of evil*," because, as the Apostle says to the Thessalonians, it will interrupt *man's day* with terrible disaster: "When they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child, and they shall not escape." 1 Thess. v. 3. Here, in Jer. xvii., the reader will observe that the word, day of man (*ημερα ανθρωπου*) is anarthrous, and yet it is antithetical to "*the day of evil*," a synonyme for "the day of the Lord." Thus one chief criticism of Mr. Birks is disposed of, by the use of the Septuagint. But, the argument I wish especially to urge is this, (and it shall be my final remark)—if *ημερα ανθρωπου*, in the Old Testament, be essentially the same with *Ανθρωπινη ημερα*, in the New, why object to the corresponding relation between *ημερα του Κυριου* and *Κυριακη ημερα*.

I have thus endeavoured, I trust, dispassionately, to examine Mr. Birks' letters. THE SPIRIT OF SYSTEM—the cramping tendency, it is sad to think, of superior minds—runs through them, as through his original article. Forgetting that the Word of God should be expected to outgrow all our systems; that its unity must be richer in variety than has yet been discovered; he attributes to it—as Lord Bacon alleges to have been the mistake of students of nature—"a greater degree of order, simplicity, and regularity, (*i.e.* obviously) than is actually indicated by observation." Hence he

has dogmatized in the application of a few general rules, and cannot brook my humble attempts at further investigation. Indeed, the tone of his remarks has been, in many instances, overbearing. But there is no disputing concerning *tastes*. I shall only remind him, as he rests his vindication of this on zeal for the truth, that there is a *bitter zeal* (James iii. 14) against which even the disciple who lay on the bosom of love needed to be cautioned. Luke ix. 49, 54, 55. If I have transgressed herein myself, I refuse not to bear the blame; though, in truth, I cannot discern the evidence on which my brother has made the charge. But even if he could substantiate it, need I say that his exemplification of the contrary would have been more worthy of the occasion than retaliation.

As to the evil prognostications in which he has indulged concerning the issue of my prophetic views, this is a weapon I shall not handle. But it has been handled, let me inform Mr. Birks, by another writer, and against the precious truth of the Premillennial advent, amongst the advocates of which he is assigned a distinguished position. Indeed, the similarity of peroration, in this respect, between Mr. Birks' letters, and the Rev. David Brown's recent work on the second advent—the writer alluded to—is so remarkable, that for the instruction of my readers, I cannot forbear comparing the respective extracts.

Mr. BIRKS.

"I have now replied fully to every stricture.... affecting my original argument. I believe that his abstract principles on the subject are not only unscriptural, but practically mischievous; that they substitute wire-drawn abstractions, and baseless hypothetical systems of the universe, for the actual course of Divine providence... Are like the wings of Icarus, which may soon precipitate those who trust in them before they are aware, from the height of fancied superior spirituality, into an abyss of spiritual extravagancies; and will betray them into positive infidelity. It is a strong and deep conviction of the practical danger of these views, and their seductive character, on the first superficial view, which prompted my remarks. Viewing Christianity on the side of its evidences, this extreme Futurism of the Pamphlet is a rent down to the foundation; and neither the personal piety of those who embrace it, nor their claims to superior light, can undo the effects of their rash and superficial criticisms, in imperilling the faith of Christians in these days of coming temptation. This is my deep, my deliberate and growing conviction. Multitudes, without being aware, stand on the edge of a precipice.... God will vindicate His own cause, but alas for the multitudes who become the prey of the deceiver.

Mr. BROWN.

"Here I close this investigation. I have shown, I think, under a number of heads, that the premillennial scheme is at variance with the Word of God—that it proceeds upon crude and arbitrary principles of interpretation, while it shrinks from carrying out even these to their legitimate results—that as a system it wants coherence, and is palpably defective, making no provision for some of the most important events which are to occur in the history of our race—and that its bearing on some of the most precious doctrines of God's Word are painful and perilous.

"These are strong things to say; could I have taken the view of this system which many do who never examined it—that it is a harmless one, which it matters little whether we embrace or reject—I have too much dislike to oppose brethren in the common salvation, to have sent forth such a volume as this. It is because I saw in it *elements which at once fascinate the carnal and attract the spiritual*, that I thought it of consequence to sift it. And none of the least of my motives, in undertaking this inquiry, was the desire to rescue "*THE BLESSED HOPE*" of the Saviour's appearing from the erroneous and repulsive circumstances with which this doctrine invests it.

Upon the candid reader, I am satisfied, the foregoing

extracts will producé no other impression than that their respective authors are conscious of their popular notions being somewhat on the decline. At all events, it is thus I accept, in behalf of Futurist views, these, and Mr. Birks' other digressions, of the same kind, from the strict line of legitimate argument.

Yours, &c.,

JAMES KELLY.

In addition to the foregoing Letter, the Author takes this opportunity of submitting to his readers an extract, which may interest, from an old writer of the seventeenth century, shewing that so far back towards the Reformation the clue of interpretation pursued in the present work had been very nearly approached by others.

“ Probably, most of the things prophesied of in the Revelation from chapter iv. may and must be done at and after Christ's coming from heaven ; my reasons for such a supposition are—

1. Because the time of John's receiving of it is called the Lord's day, (Rev. i. 10) and very probably relates to that saying of Christ, John xxi. 22, 23 : ‘ If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee ? ’ which might be this coming, called the Lord's day, so called, *because Christ*

did in vision discover all things to John, as it shall be done over when he cometh, both in bringing down of his enemies, and saving his people.

2. Because very probably that the opening of the seals, sounding of the trumpets, and pouring out of the vials, may be *at and after Christ's coming from heaven*, and if so, it must admit of time for the doing thereof, and must be the time of perfecting the Restauration work spoken of by the Prophets, and saving of the Church,"* (Israel.)

* Body of Divinity, by Thomas Collier, 1674. p. 589.

Churton House, Belgrave Road,
1851.



THE APOCALYPSE INTERPRETED.

CHAPTER VIII.

SECTION FIRST.

Verses 1—6.

1 And when he had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour.

2 And I saw the seven angels which stood before God ; and to them were given seven trumpets.

3 And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer ; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne.

4 And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand.

5 And the angel took the censer, and filled it with fire of the altar, and cast it into the earth : and there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings, and an earthquake.

6 And the seven angels which had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound.

IN entering upon the examination of another great division of the prophecies of this book, it may be well for the reader to be reminded of what has been already submitted as the hope of the present Church of God, even translation from the earth to be with their Lord, before the things here

recorded begin to run their course, to come with Him afterwards when He appears in the brightness of His glory. Thus, the rehearsal before us is to interest the believer, not as disclosing events which may involve himself personally, but as admitting him into the counsels of his God concerning others. In the destruction which came upon Sodom and Gomorrah, Abraham was not involved, but God said, “ Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do ? ” Gen. xviii. 17.

Accordingly, it was communicated to him before-hand ; and it exercised, we know, the best feelings of his heart in tender compassion for his fellows, and zeal for the honour of Jehovah. In this character of *friends* it is that the whole Church of this dispensation is contemplated here. Our God reveals to them what He purposes doing on the earth, after that they are gathered to meet their Lord in the air.

It is scarcely necessary to apprise the reader, that the series of *trumpet* visitations now before us, like that of the *seals* already considered, is interpreted by our popular Commentators, *symbolically* ; being referred by some, to the heresies which distracted the Church in the early ages ; by others, to the successive irruptions of the barbarous nations on the Roman empire. Thus, amidst the diversity of view which prevails, one feature is held in common by both classes of writers, namely,

that these prophecies have been long since fulfilled, and converted into history. Indeed, this latter notion may be regarded as the parent mistake on the subject. For, if the events pointed out have already happened, then, as no such *literal* prodigies are found on record, the interpreter is reduced to the necessity of transforming them into figure, or allegory, or symbol, as he is best able. And, as the taste of authors and their historical research range in different directions, and are supported by various degrees of ingenuity, the success in this department is of course equally dissimilar. Upon this point the following dispassionate remarks by the celebrated *Michaelis* may be considered worthy of the reader's attention :—

“As most men are acquainted with the history of their own country, and this history always appears of so much the more importance in proportion as we know the less of the history of other countries, the interpreters of the Apocalypse have sought at home for the completion of its prophecies : and as prophetic descriptions, without either names or dates, are applicable to various events, each interpreter has found, in a great part of the Apocalypse, the history of his own country. And when we consider that the passion for this mode of interpretation has been variously modified, sometimes by religious zeal and a spirit of persecution, at other times, by a sense of oppression

and enmity to the ruling Church, we need not wonder that the commentaries on the Apocalypse have assumed such various shapes, that what is affirmed as indisputably true in the one, is as flatly contradicted in the other.”*

Insisting, moreover, upon a knowledge of history, especially of the history of Asia, as a requisite qualification for the interpretation of the Apocalypse, this candid writer thus enlarges:—

“ A general knowledge of history is by no means sufficient ; it must be a knowledge which descends to the most minute particulars ; for a prophecy, in which neither person nor place is named, we can understand only by knowing the distinguishing circumstances of those events to which it relates. Great events, such as battles, political revolutions, religious persecutions, when examined only at large, are for the most part so similar to each other, that, without names and dates, it is difficult to distinguish them. At least there is hardly any great event to which there is not something in history which bears resemblance, and with which, therefore, it might possibly be confounded, when all distinctions of geography and chronology are set aside, unless we know the more minute circumstances which distinguish the one from the other. Two battles fought by the French, the one in 1513, the other in 1757, have a great resemblance

* Introduction to the New Testament, by Michaelis, vol. iv. p. 510.

to each other, though in importance they were very unlike. Suppose, then, that these two battles were represented in painting, and that some ages hence, when the present military dress, modern tactics, and plans of attack, which to us would easily distinguish the one engagement from the other, the two paintings should be put into the hands of a person unacquainted with these particulars, he would be at a loss to determine which of the two paintings represented the one, and which the other engagement. And every one, who has visited galleries of historical paintings, knows how difficult it is, without a very particular knowledge of history, to pass through the gallery without being at a loss in discovering the meaning of the subjects. But the Commentators on the Apocalypse are so far from having possessed a complete knowledge of history, that the greatest part of them have displayed only a moderate share of it. Vitringa, perhaps, will here likewise be mentioned as an exception ; but among the Commentators on the Apocalypse we can reckon only one Vitringa ; and even Vitringa's historical knowledge was not sufficiently extensive. The ancient history before the birth of Christ is foreign to our present purpose ; and the history of the seventeen last centuries was understood by Vitringa, in its full extent, only so far as it relates to Europe. But we cannot expect that prophecies, addressed to

seven communities in Asia Minor, should be fulfilled only in Europe, or in the Latin Church. Christianity flourished under the Eastern, as well as under the Western Emperors; it was propagated likewise in Arabia, in Persia, in the great Tartary, from the Caspian Sea to the borders of China, and even in China itself. Asia has been the seat of the most important revolutions, with which the history of Christianity is closely connected. In Asia was founded the religion of Mohammed; and out of Asia emerged the Saracens, the Turks, and the Tartars. Whoever, therefore, is not acquainted with the Constantinopolitan and Asiatic histories of these nations, is by no means qualified to become an interpreter of the Apocalypse. But among all who have ventured to interpret it, not one can boast of this thorough acquaintance; and the principal reason is, that the best accounts of the Saracens, the Turks, and the Tartars, are contained in Syriac and Arabic authors, which very few historians can read in the original, and of which we have either no translations at all, or not such as an historian can appeal to, as to an original document.”

To this sentence it is to be observed, that our Author has appended the following remarkable note :—

“ It must be admitted, however, that even they who were better acquainted with the Constanti-

nopolitan and Arabic histories than we are, did not meet with better success. For Barhebræus, the most celebrated historian of the east, who lived in the reign of the great Tartarian conqueror Hulac, and was himself a witness of very important revolutions, doubted of the divinity of the Apocalypse, consequently he did not perceive any correspondence between the prophecies of the Apocalypse and the Asiatic history.”*

This admission ought not to be lost on the enquiring reader. With what unsatisfactory results the magazine of *Western* History has been ransacked by Præterist expositors of the Apocalypse, let their mutually destructive productions testify. But superadded to this, it appears from the above admission, that *Eastern* history is as barren of the object of pursuit. Surely this of itself ought to commend to the ingenuous enquirer, the position taken up in these pages, namely, that the Apocalypse is to be interpreted, not in the light of past history, but in that of the day of the Lord, yet to come.

Ver. 1. *And when he had opened the seventh seal.*] It has been already observed,† that under the six seals which have preceded, a broad outline is given of the Divine visitations which will mark the coming day of wrath, and that under the head of the seventh seal, the Spirit proceeds to traverse

* Michaëlis, vol. iv. p. 508.

+ Vol. i. p. 309.

the ground over again, distributing those visitations into their details, as they will affect first the Apostate Jews, and then the arrogant and oppressing Gentiles. The series of the seals not being exhausted in bringing out the great crisis portrayed in Chapter VI., but one of them being thus reserved, as a medium of transition to the visions under the trumpets and vials, serves to intimate that the consummation presented to the reader, is still in suspense. It is as though in having our attention drawn to a pendent chain of seven links, just as we got to the contemplation of the last in order, we saw it detached from its place in succession, and used as a ring wherefrom to hang a parallel and conterminous chain of double the number of links. This would significantly indicate that our survey of the original chain were not complete, till we ranged over its fellow links, all but interwoven with it. Thus, the Christian reader as he sees the seventh seal employed to introduce the trumpets and vials, is led at once to interpret them, in some way or other under it. He might expect it in due course to prove itself to be the closing scene of the drama; but instead of this, he perceives that it discharges its import into two other series of announcements, and therefore he has first to review these, ere he reaches the designed issue. Perhaps, indeed, it is the seventh trumpet, and

the seventh vial, which contain the exact burden of the seventh seal, which is merely said, in its place, to have been opened ; but, then, in bringing out this burden, the Spirit, as is His wont, rehearses in detail, the preceding events which had been condensed in the seals. By this method of understanding the subject, the relative position of the seventh seal may be simplified to the reader, and the Author begs it may be combined with what has been already suggested.*

There was silence in heaven.] This observance of silence seems to indicate that solemn reverence pervades the ranks of God's attendant hosts, whilst he deliberates, as it were, in His counsel chamber, on the execution of His threatened judgments. It is in this sense, keeping silence is referred to in the book of Job : "Unto me men gave ear, and waited, and kept silence at my counsel." Job.xxix. 21. The imminence, moreover, of the outburst of Divine wrath now about to take place, as something marvellous, may well be associated with *silence* on the part of those who are made cognizant of it. Thus, we read, that at the future restoration of the Jewish people, eclipsing, as it will, the wonders of their exodus from Egypt, "the nations shall see and be confounded at all their might: they shall lay their hand upon their mouth, their ear shall be deaf." Micah vii. 16.

* See vol. i., page 309—311.

And as there is silence in *heaven* at the manifested preparation for judgment, so we find the inhabitants of *earth* in their turn, called to the same, as the dread crisis to them approaches: “The Lord is in his holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before him.” Hab. ii. 20. Again, “Be silent, O all flesh, before the Lord: for he is raised up out of his holy habitation.” Zech. ii. 13. To the same effect, the Prophet Zephaniah proclaims:—“Hold thy peace at the presence of the Lord God; for the day of the Lord is at hand: for the Lord hath prepared a sacrifice, he hath bid his guests.” Zeph. i. 7. And then follows the detailed recital of His strokes of anger as they will fall on various classes of the wicked. Thus, also, we read in the Psalms, evidently referring to this portentous period:—“Thou, even thou, art to be feared; and who may stand in thy sight when once thou art angry, Thou didst cause judgment to be heard from heaven, the earth feared and was still, when God arose to judgment to save all the meek of the earth.” Ps. lxxvi. 7—9. And, here, the designed purport of God’s judicial interposition, as indicated by the words “*to save all the meek of the earth*” remarkably corresponds, as we shall presently see, with what is represented as evoking the trumpet woes of this book, namely, the prayers of the righteous ascending like incense before the Lord of Sabaoth.

About the space of half an hour.] This duration may be intended to harmonize with the time usually occupied by the silent worshippers in the temple whilst the Priest retired to perform his office of burning incense. What follows in verses 3 and 4 will be seen to confirm this.

Ver. 2. *And I saw the seven angels which stood before God.]* We have had no mention made of these before, unless we identify them with “the seven spirits” referred to in ch. iv. 5, which comparison with ch. i. 4, shews to be inadmissible. It would appear, then, they are specially dignified functionaries of heaven, executors of the Divine behests. And as Solomon’s attendants were congratulated by the Queen of Sheba for their nearness to their Royal Master, so here it is recorded of these Ministers of the Lord who do His pleasure, that “*they stood before God.*”

And to them were given seven trumpets.] Trumpets were used among the Israelites, according to the Divine command, for the calling of assemblies, and giving signal to the people to move from their encampments, and as an alarm when they were to go forth to war. They were also wont to be sounded at the celebration of the solemn festivals, instituted of God, and especially over the burnt offerings, and sacrifices of peace offerings. See Num. x. Now, the judgments coming upon the earth, and which the prophet

Zephaniah just cited proclaims, amidst the silent awe of mankind, are compared, as we have seen, to the Lord's preparation of *a sacrifice*; and the period of these judgments is emphatically called "THE DAY OF THE LORD'S SACRIFICE," as though His holy indignation against transgression shall then be satisfied. Accordingly, identifying with this period, that which is rehearsed under the series of visions now opening before us, it seems in keeping with the spirit's comparison, in the Old Testament, that it should be associated with the sounding of trumpets. But what I conceive to be principally applicable here is the fact, that the great solemnities of the seventh month amongst the Jews, which yet altogether await their anti-typical events, in the consummated humiliation and final blessedness of that people, were ushered in by an especial blowing of trumpets; and so in the prophet Joel, which plainly contemplates these same events, the prefatory summons is given to "blow a trumpet in Zion." Joel ii. 1. Connecting this with the remarkable employment of trumpets on the occasion of the taking of Jericho, the earnest to the children of Israel of their instalment into the promised inheritance of Canaan, we seem to be furnished with an intelligent clue to the general design of the Apocalyptic trumpets as now introduced. In the first place, we read in the history of the overthrow of Jericho, that

“seven” trumpets, the precise number we have here, were then put in requisition. Secondly, it is emphatically recorded that when the seven trumpets were blown by the priests according to the prescribed routine, then “the wall of the city fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city, every man straight before him, and they took the city,” (Joshua vi. 20); hereupon ensuing the exterminating ruin pronounced by God, upon its inhabitants. Now this recital has its obvious counterpart in the great catastrophe contained under the seventh trumpet:—“And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell: and great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath.” Rev. xvi. 19. The reader will indeed perceive that proximately this announcement belongs to the seventh *vial*. But he is reminded of what has been already observed,* that, of the outburst of the Divine vengeance under all the vials, the seventh trumpet is as an overture ushering it in. Therefore, the seventh trumpet may be well regarded as virtually comprising what is here assigned to it.

As, then, when the trumpets were blown at Jericho, *Israel of old* may be said to have triumphed over their enemies, so when the visions

rehearsed under these symbols in the Apocalypse are accomplished, their representatives—*the nation that shall be*, will, under the true Joshua, discomfit the Antichristian confederacy of the earth, yet to be arrayed against them ; and “the kingdoms of this world becoming the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ,” the first dominion shall come to the daughter of Zion. Antecedently, however—upon this favoured people themselves, terrible judgments shall descend to chastise and humble them, and purge out the apostates ; and so ere the *seventh* trumpet sounds, which is pregnant with the doom of their oppressing enemies, they will have undergone the visitations depicted under the *six preceding*.

Ver. 3. *And another angel came.*] These seven angels entrusted with the execution of judgment under the trumpets, having been just introduced, as it were, on the stage, the vision is suspended, in order to give information touching one great cause of such judgment which will have been in operation ; and this is conveyed by another vision, in which *another* angel appears, evidently not the Lord Jesus, as has been strangely thought by commentators, but a created being belonging to the same category as those previously mentioned.

And stood at the altar.] This altar, called in the next clause “*the golden altar*,” was in the holy place. It was at this altar that the priests daily

offered up incense whilst the people were praying without.

Having a golden censer.] The introduction here of the golden censer, which it appears was used by the High Priest only when he went into the holiest of all, on the great day of atonement,* whereas they were brazen censers which were used ordinarily,† seems intended to intimate, that the offering about to be noticed finds acceptance with God, in the power of full priestly mediation, and we know that this inheres in the Lord Jesus alone.

Ver. 3, 4. *And there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand.*] The use of incense, here, is manifestly to represent that the prayers which it accompanies find acceptance before God, solely through the intercession of the Lord Jesus, of which incense may be said to be the symbol. Thus we read in the Gospel by St. Luke, that as Zacharias was burning incense in the temple, according to the custom of the priest's office, the whole multitude of the people were praying without, at that very time. And in the 141st Psalm it is written, "Let my prayer

* Joseph. Antiq. xvi. 4. 4. + Numbers xvi. 6, 39.

be set forth before thee as incense.” The act of the Angel strikingly accords with that enjoined on Aaron, when Israel murmured in the wilderness :—“ Take a censer and put fire therein from off the altar, and put on incense, and go quickly into the congregation,” Num. xvi. 46 ; only then the object was “ *to make an atonement,*” as it is added, for the sin which had been committed, whilst here it is to pourtray another phase of the antitype, *prayer* wafted heavenwards. Such, then, is the cause of the commissioning of the seven trumpet angels. Prayer is, at this period, being offered to God by His witnessing people left on the earth ; and, especially, by those in the now reinhabited Jerusalem, who will sigh and cry for all the abominations done in their midst. Ezek. ix. 4. They will call upon Him in the day of trouble, and He will proceed, at once, to deliver them. Had the sounding of the trumpets immediately ensued upon the appearance of the seven angels, this precious truth, that God is a prayer-hearing, and prayer-answering God, would not be commended to us. But no sooner are the agents of judgment recognized by the inspired Seer, than the vision is interrupted by this parenthetical scene, to shew whence the judgment comes, what the secret springs are, which set in motion the wheels of an avenging God. It is not, of course, that any angel or other than the

Lord Jesus is a Priestly mediator between man and God ; but to an angel is committed the rehearsal, ministerially, of this significant outward act, which necessarily implies that the true High Priest has been discharging His gracious functions.

Ver. 5. *And the angel took the censer, and filled it with fire of the altar, and cast it into the earth.*] This seems, obviously, to symbolize the Divine answer to the prayers just presented ; and, as already said, it is an answer of judgment. The fire of the altar, the emblem of God's holiness, (and it is the *brazen* altar we are to understand here ; for upon the *golden* altar was no fire except what was in the censer, when deposited on it) now comes into contact with the earth, and the plagues, the recital of which follows, are let loose ; just as when "*the ashes of the furnace*" (no doubt the same sacred fire of the sacrificial altar) were sprinkled by Moses, "it became a boil breaking forth with blains upon man, and upon beast." Ex. ix. 10. That this is the import of the casting the sacred fire to the earth is confirmed by the prophet Ezekiel, where the precisely similar act is employed as a signal for the descent of strokes of judgment. Ezek. x. 2.

And there were voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, and an earthquake.] These concomitants of the scene remind us of the Lord's

appearance on Mount Sinai. They augur that righteous judgment is now about to proceed forth from the Divine presence. See on ch. iv. 3., vol. 1, p. 267.

Ver. 6. *And the seven angels which had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound.*] The first vision is now resumed. The Apostle having commenced its recital, had paused for a moment to give, under another vision, the information just considered. This parenthesis being finished, he continues his original subject.

CHAPTER VIII.

SECTION SECOND.

Verses 7—13.

7 The first angel sounded, and there followed hail and fire mingled with blood, and they were cast upon the earth: and the third part of trees was burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up.

8 And the second angel sounded, and as it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea: and the third part of the sea became blood;

9 And the third part of the creatures which were in the sea, and had life, died; and the third part of the ships were destroyed.

10 And the third angel sounded, and there fell a great star from heaven, burning as it were a lamp, and it fell upon the third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of waters;

11 And the name of the star is called Wormwood: and the third part of the waters became wormwood; and many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter.

12 And the fourth angel sounded, and the third part of the sun was smitten, and the third part of the moon, and the third part of the stars; so as the third part of them was darkened, and the day shone not for a third part of it, and the night likewise.

13 And I beheld, and heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, Woe, woe, woe, to the inhabitants of the earth by reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels, which are yet to sound!

Ver. 7. *The first angel sounded, and there followed hail and fire mingled with blood, and they were cast upon the earth.*] There is nothing here about heresies, or the invasions of armies, as is traditionally believed, but a plain reference to a stroke of judgment inflicted on the earth, or, the *land*, as it may be taken—that of *Judea*. The latter rendering is preferable, as more consistent with the chastening aspect of the tenor of these visions towards the Jewish people.

Comparing scripture with scripture, we have light thrown upon the literal interpretation that puts it beyond all reasonable doubt. For example, we read in the prophet Joel the parallel announcement: “I will shew wonders in the heavens, and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke.” Joel ii. 30. Here there is no metaphor, at least it is not pretended that the language relates to any political or ecclesiastical event. Why, then, should it be so understood in the Apocalypse? Besides, for the literal interpretation we have an actual precedent in one of the plagues visited on Egypt

of old: "And Moses stretched forth his rod toward heaven; and the Lord sent thunder and hail, and the fire ran along upon the ground; and the Lord rained hail upon the land of Egypt. So there was hail, and fire mingled with the hail, very grievous, such as there was none like it in all the land of Egypt since it became a nation." Ex. ix. 23, 24. Here is a plain historical record of what *has been*; and why should we hesitate to believe that the like *shall be again*? It is not mentioned, indeed, that the hail and the fire in Egypt was mingled with *blood*, but we can easily conceive of this additional accompaniment belonging to "the great and terrible day of the Lord." Indeed, the prophet Joel, as we have seen, emphatically specifies it in his reference.

And the third part of trees was burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up.] Such is the effect of this plague, and very naturally—the vegetation of the land suffers. This, probably, is part of the detail of the fourth seal, which, as we have seen, portrays the prevalence of famine. The famine in question, as it will affect the Jews, may be produced by this very disaster coming upon Judea. May it not be that, also, which the prophet Joel mourns over, saying: "Alas for the day! for the day of the Lord is at hand, and as a destruction from the Almighty shall it come. Is not the meat cut off before our eyes, The seed is rotten

under their clods, the garners are laid desolate, the barns are broken down; for the corn is withered. How do the beasts groan! the herds of cattle are perplexed, because they have no pasture; yea, the flocks of sheep are made desolate. O Lord, to thee will I cry: for the fire hath devoured the pastures of the wilderness, and the flame hath burned all the trees of the field. The beasts of the field cry also unto thee: for the rivers of waters are dried up, and the fire hath devoured the pastures of the wilderness.” Joel i. 15—20. (See also Isa. xv. 6, Jer. xiv. 3—6.) It is observable that in this lamentation of the prophet, while *the breaking down of the barns* implies—at least is consistent with—the operation of the plague of *hail*, the devouring element of *fire* is expressly named as in requisition. Surely the coincidence between this and the tenor of the first trumpet should not be overlooked. Does not the prophet Habakkuk, also, represent the exercise of faith, which, when this time of calamity comes, shall be so acceptable to God from the tried Jewish remnant: “Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.” Hab. iii. 17, 18. That the devastation

predicted is said to be confined to a “third part of the trees,” indicates, doubtless, that the Lord proposes not making a full end of His Jewish people, but that in the midst of judgment He remembers mercy. (See Ezek. v. 11, 12.) Such mitigation, it is to be observed, accompanies not the visitation under the vials. Nor does it extend even here beyond the trees. The grass is spoken of as altogether burnt up. Perhaps this discrimination should lead us to regard the recital here as giving a detail of the fourth seal. Therein we saw that amidst the prevalence of famine, in respect to the *grain* crops of wheat and barley, which may well be comprised under the head of “all green grass,” the command is given, “hurt not the wine and the oil.” May not this then relate to the exemption of the vines and the olive trees in Palestine, as included in the *two thirds of the trees*, which it appears are not burnt up?

Ver. 8. *And the second angel sounded, and as it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea: and the third part of the sea became blood.*] God’s hand still smites: but here, again, we have a parallel in the sacred history. “And the Lord spake unto Moses, say unto Aaron, take thy rod, and stretch out thine hand upon the waters of Egypt, upon their streams, upon their rivers, and upon their ponds, and upon all their pools of water, that they may

become blood ; and that there may be blood throughout all the land of Egypt. . . . And Moses and Aaron did so, as the Lord commanded, and he lifted up the rod, and smote the waters that were in the river in the sight of Pharaoh and in the sight of his servants, and all the waters that were in the river were turned to blood. And the fish that was in the river died ; and the river stank, and the Egyptians could not drink of the water of the river ; and there was blood throughout all the land of Egypt.” Ex. vii. 19—21. The only difference between the plague thus recited and that before us, is in regard to the department of creation affected, and the instrumentality employed. In Egypt they were the inland waters that underwent this appalling change. Here it is the sea. The rod of Moses was then used ; now it is the injection of a burning mountain.

1. As to the sea denoted, it is, doubtless, the Mediterranean, or “ great sea,” as the Hebrews called it, which washed their coasts.

2. As to the great mountain burning with fire, cast into it, marvellous though it be, what forbids but that we should suppose it to be some combustible material body condensed in the laboratory of the atmosphere by Divine power, or some real local mountain dislocated from its place and precipitated into the Mediterranean, so as to affect the ports of Palestine. To favor this latter

conjecture we have a remarkable allusion in the book of Psalms: "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, *though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea*; Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof." Ps. xlv. 1—3. This whole Psalm is evidently the prepared utterance of a remnant of faithful Jews in the latter day, triumphing in Jehovah as their refuge, amidst the most terrifying phenomena going on around them. May we not then identify them with that proportion of true witnesses to God who, by and bye, will have their lot cast in the Jewish land, amongst their apostate nation, and who will stand unharmed and unintimidated by the Divine demonstrations against the guilty. Sympathizing with the two illustrious witnesses for God, who will then be occupied in Jerusalem with their miraculous testimony,* may not these faithful ones participate in the administration of this very judgment, thus fulfilling the striking intimation of our Lord, when on the occasion of his performing himself a significant miracle of judgment directed against the unbelieving nation, he said to his disciples, "Verily I say unto you, If ye have faith, and doubt not, ye shall not only do this

* See ch. xi.

which is done to the fig tree, but also, if ye shall say unto this mountain, “Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea, it shall be done. And all things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.” Mat. xxi. 21, 22.

It is observable also, that, in the prophet Jeremiah, Babylon—doubtless, as contemplated in its revival in the Apocalypse*—is sentenced to become this exact object, *a burnt mountain*: “Behold, I am against thee, O destroying mountain, saith the Lord, which destroyest all the earth; and I will stretch out my hand upon thee, and roll thee down from the rocks, and will make thee *a burnt mountain*.” Jer. li. 25. What is the designed connection then, we may ask, between the end of Babylon, thus described, and the burning mountain before us, taken literally? Perhaps it is this, that, as Babylon will be the centre of that awful system of wickedness, which will have propagated itself among the Jews returned to their land, God hereby makes it in the very symbol of its destruction one means of His sore retribution upon that people. Just as the golden calf, the ensign of their idolatry, of old, was dealt with by Moses, when “he took and burned it in the fire, and ground it to powder, and strawed it upon the water,” and made the guilty parties drink of it. Ex. xxxii. 20. Here the object

* Vol. i. p. 161, 364.

of their sin, reduced to ruin, was rendered their punishment, which penetrated, we can imagine, in its painful consequences, into their inmost frame. And, similarly, it may be ordered of God, that, by the burning mountain,—the already ordained emblem of Babylon's destruction,—the Jewish accomplices in her wickedness shall, at once, be made to feel the Divine wrath, and discern its provoking cause. Whilst, in the eyes of the faithful remnant, this *mode* of judgment will also vividly rehearse the appointed downfall of their then imposing enemy. Babylon's own doom they will hence learn, is surely coming, when, amidst all her ease and arrogance, "she shall be utterly burned with fire: for strong is the Lord God that judgeth her." Rev. xviii. 7, 8.

It may here occur to some readers, concerning what is said of a proportion of the sea becoming blood, that, perhaps this may be the natural result of the miraculous agency just rehearsed. And, indeed, such a combination of convulsion by sea and land, accompanied by conflagration, in the maritime regions of Palestine, may easily be conceived to produce extensive loss of life, in which, also, blood may be shed, so as to ensanguine the surrounding ocean, like to what has been recorded as the result of some naval engagements. Still, with the precedent referred to, of what occurred in Egypt, wherein the similar plague of blood was certainly not the

issue of any sanguinary destruction of life, we ought to be slow to speculate upon the operation of such cause here; especially as there is no mention made of it in the vision, beyond what occurs in the next clause, which merely speaks of mortality ensuing amongst all the marine tribes.

Ver. 9. *And the third part of the creatures which were in the sea, and had life, died.*] This may be regarded as a natural consequence of the shock and derangement, which shall have been sustained by their native element. Thus, the judgment ascends nearer and nearer as from the extremities of nature, according to the order of its creation, towards man, the guilty head. Vegetable life had suffered first, now it is the sea and its tribes of occupants. The same thing is recorded to have happened among the plagues of Egypt, when the waters that were in the river were turned to blood, it is added, “and the fish that was in the river, died.” Ex. vii. 21.

And the third part of the ships were destroyed.] That is, the shipping, we may conceive, in and about the Jewish harbours in the Mediterranean, the sea alluded to. No doubt, with the general revival of the East, its commerce will receive a mighty impulse; and reoccupied Palestine—its resources now developing under the energy of its Antichristian rulers—will not be unvisited by the spirit of commercial enterprise. Accordingly, we

read of "*the ships of Tarshish*" amongst other objects of proud complacency, upon which the coming day of the Lord shall empty its "burden of woe" (Isa. ii. 16); and it may be by means of this very judgment, under the second trumpet, when these ships, with others, shall be waiting to discharge their merchandise into Jewish ports. We know that, in former times, the merchant navy of Solomon were wont to repair to 'Tarshish; and once every three years came the ships of that region to Judea, "bringing gold and silver, ivory, and apes, and peacocks." 2 Chron. ix. 21.

Ver. 10. *And the third angel sounded, and there fell a great star from heaven, burning as it were a lamp.*] Nothing forbids the taking this literally, and the portent of a falling star may well be conceived as adding to the consternation of the period contemplated. But, further, as we saw that the burning mountain, which constitutes the disastrous agency under the preceding trumpet, was, at the same time, the Spirit's symbol of the doomed Babylon; so the *star* employed here may bear a similar relation to the denounced Antichrist; for he is derided in the prophet Isaiah under this very image:—"How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning!" Isa. xiv. 12. And thus will the Antichristian Jews be reminded, by the employment of a fallen star, for the infliction of a fresh stroke of judgment upon them, that to

their league with THIS WICKED ONE, their chastisement is to be ascribed ; and the faithful remnant will herein read, for their comfort, that yet a little while, and the blaspheming usurper will be dethroned, and the true king installed in His inalienable glory.

Burning as it were a lamp.] The Greek word here rendered *lamp*, was commonly employed by the ancients to denote a meteor, and the shooting of such body through the air, with a long horn of light, is matter of not uncommon observation among ourselves. Let us imagine, then, a great star of this kind falling from the heavens, and bursting in fiery fragments over the Jewish land, and we have the scene here presented to us.

And it fell upon the third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of waters.] The vegetation of the earth was affected under the first trumpet ; then the sea, under the second ; and now, under the third, the inland waters. Upon the salubrity of these, we know how much depends, at all times, the refreshment of both man and beast. Still, the like moderation obtains, as in the preceding visitations. It is only the *third* part of the waters upon which the baleful influence descends.

Ver. 11. *And the name of the star is called Wormwood.*] The design of this name seems to be, to mark the more emphatically, the connection of the star with the disastrous event recited in the next clause :—

*And the third part of the waters became worm-wood.] A complete privation, so far, of the healthful fluid, would be more bearable than this, so that here is an aggravation of the calamity of drought. Just as it was an aggravation of their trial to Israel of old, in the wilderness, when in their extremity of thirst, they came to water, but found it bitter that they could not drink it. Ex. xv. 23. And, no doubt this judgment was in the mind of God, when, by His servant Moses, He warned Israel of the cursing, and vexation, and mischiefs, which their apostacy should bring upon them in the latter day (Deut. xxviii. 20); and when, by the prophet Jeremiah, the minute details of that apostacy—strikingly parallel to other predictions of the future—are followed up by a threatening to this exact effect:—“Therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; *Behold, I will feed them, even this people, with wormwood, and give them water of gall to drink.*” Jer. ix. 15.*

It may be profitable to glance at the contemplated condition of the Jewish people, according to Jeremiah, when this retribution comes upon them. It fills up the allusions to their case, in connection with the trumpet visions in the Apocalypse.

1. Their licentiousness of life is noticed: “They be all adulterers,” says the prophet, “an assembly of treacherous men.” ver. 2. This agrees with the character already remarked on, as given to

Jerusalem, in chap. xi. of this book,—“ the city which is *spiritually* called SODOM ; also, with the features of sensuality and uncleanness, which are recited in the Epistles of Jude and Peter, as marking the wickedness of the last times.

2. Their perfidiousness in their social and even family relations : “ Take ye heed,” continues the prophet, “ every one of his *neighbour*, and trust ye not in any *brother* : for every brother will utterly supplant, and every neighbour will walk with slanders.” ver. 4. And this, again, harmonizes with the circumstances of domestic treachery (Micah vii. 5, 6) which our blessed Lord applies to the experience of His Jewish disciples, which, doubtless, had a fulfilment at the time of His first advent, but relates more especially to the period of the second.*

3. Hereupon, the Lord announces His purposes of chastisement : “ Therefore, thus saith the Lord of hosts, Behold, I will melt them, and try them ; for how shall I do for the daughter of my people ? . . . Shall I not visit them for these things ? saith the Lord : shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this ? ” ver. 7, 9. And this chastisement, we find, when we come to examine it, consists of just such strokes of wrath as are presented to us generally under the first three trumpets. “ The mountains ” and “ the habitations of the wilderness ”

* See Mat. x. 34—39.

—the lowlands, as we should call them, “are burned up. The fowl of the heavens and the beast are fled . . . the land perisheth and is burned up.” ver. 10, 12. To this, succeeds the threatening already adverted to, concerning the wormwood and gall, which are to be given them to drink, and the execution of which is here represented in the vision of the fourth trumpet.

And many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter.] Such will be the consequence of partaking of the nauseous draught. So essential to life is the element of water, that men will not refrain from even this forbidding supply; and yet, when they do, there will be death in the indulgence, attended, it may be, with the revolting symptoms which accompanied the drinking of the waters of jealousy by the adulteress, for *they* also were called “*bitter waters.*” See Numbers v. 18, &c. Many, we can conceive, will be the exploring searches for the pure stream which shall be made in that day, like as when Ahab, in the drought of old, divided the land between him and Obadiah, “to pass throughout it unto all fountains of water, and all brooks, if peradventure they might save even the horses and mules alive.” 1 Kings xviii. 5. But how tantalizing the result here, when, in many places, the water found shall be corrupted in its very source. Still, in the merciful reserve in the midst of all this of *two thirds* of the waters, we

see that a supply will be accessible to some ; and doubtless, the faithful remnant will be thence provided for. As the prophet says :—“ He that walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly ; he that despiseth the gain of oppressions, that shaketh his hands from holding of bribes, that stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood, and shutteth his eyes from seeing evil ; He shall dwell on high : his place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks : *bread shall be given him ; his waters shall be sure.*”

Isa. xxxiii. 15, 16. Perhaps, also, it is to the same period that the following promise refers :—“ When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them. *I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the vallies.*” Isa. xli. 17, 18.

Ver. 12. *And the fourth angel sounded, and the third part of the sun was smitten, and the third part of the moon, and the third part of the stars, so as the third part of them was darkened, and the day shone not for a third part of it, and the night likewise.]* Thus, another department of creation is employed of God to minister judgment. The sun, moon, and stars, are smitten, so that, for a third part of the day and night, the rebellious Jews are deprived of the ordinary enjoyment of light. It is a repetition of the plague (and, doubtless, they will call it to mind) which was

inflicted on their Egyptian enemies formerly, when, upon Moses stretching forth his hand toward heaven, “there was thick darkness over all the land of Egypt for three days,” while there was light in the land of Goshen. (Ex. x. 22.) Now, a sad reverse will be experienced, the appalling darkness which came upon the Egyptians will be their own portion in their land, unextended, perhaps, as yet, to the Gentile territory around them. And, is not this the judgment sealed up among the Divine treasures, to which Moses alludes when he announces to Israel that in the event of their apostacy, the Lord would smite them, so that they should “*grobe at noon-day, as the blind gropeth in darkness.*” Deut. xxviii. 29. Does not the Prophet Amos, also, refer to this period, when using almost the same words, he declares:—“It shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord God, that *I will cause the sun to go down at noon, and I will darken the earth in the clear day?*” Amos viii. 9. Again, is it not the fulfilment of this very sentence, over which the righteous remnant are brought forward by Isaiah, deploring the sins of their corrupt nation:—“Therefore is judgment far from us, neither doth justice overtake us: we wait for light, but behold obscurity; for brightness, but we walk in darkness. *We grope for the wall like the blind, and we grope as if we had no eyes: we stumble at*

noon-day as in the night." Isa. lix. 9, 10. To these enquiries, surely there can be but the one answer, when we find further, that according to the Prophet Joel, amongst the calamitous accompaniments of "the great day of the Lord"—(the period already identified as that contemplated in this book)—*darkness* is emphatically included; indeed, it is denominated, "A DAY OF DARKNESS;" and whatever else this indicates, it certainly imports the literal idea when we read in connexion with it:—"The sun and the moon shall be dark, and the stars shall withdraw their shining." (Joel ii. 2, 10.)

Let us still bear in mind, however, that in the *third* part of the heavenly luminaries being smitten, that is, this proportion only of the day and night being affected by the phenomena of darkness, a mitigation of the judgment is intended. And, this is in keeping with what the Lord says elsewhere of the Jewish people themselves; "I will not make a full end of *thee*." Jer. xxx. 11. No note of this kind occurs in regard to his dealing with their Gentile oppressors, when their time comes, under the outpouring of the vials. On the contrary, all the judgments recited, in their case, whilst similar in kind, are not only unmitigated, but remarkably aggravated.

Hitherto, the Lord's chastisements of the proud and unhumiliated people has directly affected only the inanimate parts of creation, with the inferior

creatures. Now, the stroke is to come closer, and fall upon their own persons. Accordingly, proclamation is made to this effect, and therein, the three remaining trumpets are represented as pregnant with woe, in an especial manner, to the inhabitants of the *land*. The agency employed, in this introductory vision, is thus described:—

Ver. 13. *And I beheld, and heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven.*] Some copies read here *an eagle*, instead of an angel; and it appears the preponderance of authority attaches to such reading. But it is very possible that both words were in the original, signifying that the angel in transacting his commission was comparable to an eagle for swiftness; and that one word was omitted in some manuscripts, and another word, in others. And, the similarity of the Greek character, at least, in termination, —ἀετῦ and αγγελου—may easily be conceived to have led to this; the respective transcribers, after writing one word, taking up their place in the manuscript as though they had written both. At all events, if both words cannot legitimately be retained, it would seem that *angel* can least consistently be dispensed with; for of such agency, and not of an eagle's, is it congruous to predicate the utterance of the proclamation which follows:—

“*Saying with a loud voice, Woe, woe, woe, to*

the inhabitants of the earth (land) by reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels, which are yet to sound.”] Such is the brief but pregnant utterance of alarm which ushers in the sounding of the remaining three trumpets ; and, in reference to their number, the doleful note is *thrice* repeated. Nor can we doubt that it will find its echo in the land of Palestine, “men’s hearts,” as our Lord says, referring to the same time, “failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth” (the land). Luke xxi. 26.

In the prophet Joel, a like note is sounded, “Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain: *let all the inhabitants of the land tremble : for THE DAY OF THE LORD cometh, for it is nigh at hand.*” Joel ii. 1. Then follows a vision of a terrifying agency ; the counterpart, as we shall see, in many respects, of what succeeds in the same order in the chapter which awaits our consideration.

But let us pause here, for a moment, to admire the mercy of God, in thus interrupting the course of His judgments by an announcement of the further and aggravated woes that are at hand. For, surely, this is an admonition to the guilty to pause, in their career of apostacy, and retrace their steps, if, peradventure, they may find admission amongst the accepted remnant. Thus

we know God dealt with Pharaoh, in inflicting a similar series of visitations, an interval between each being allowed for the haughty monarch to improve by submission. Before the flood, also, not only was there the preaching of Noah for one hundred and twenty years, but there was a lingering process in the execution of the judgment; for the destruction came not as it might have done, in one fell swoop, but there first occurred a respite of seven days; and then a period of forty days and forty nights, during which the avenging element was reaching its appointed height. For some portion of this time, there must have been opportunity for repentance; and that it was not given altogether in vain, we have a hint furnished to us in the First Epistle of Peter, when—speaking of certain spirits in prison, to whom the Lord Jesus went, in Spirit, whilst His body lay in the grave, and preached, *i.e.* proclaimed the great work of redemption which he had accomplished—the apostle characterizes them as those “which some time were disobedient when once the long suffering of God waited in the days of Noah.” This language certainly encourages the thought that, as the apostle speaks of the effect to be contemplated in the excommunication of the incestuous person, some of the antediluvians, after it was too late for their temporal preservation, underwent the “*destruction of the flesh that the spirit might be saved in the day of the Lord.*” 1 Cor. v. 5.

Thus, in the midst of the trumpet plagues, here, and before they reach their intensity, there may be a turning to God on the part of some humbled ones, who are moved by the ominous utterance of the proclaiming angel, and so mercy may rejoice in the midst of judgment.

Feb. 22. 1857.

CHAPTER IX.

SECTION FIRST.

Verses 1—12.

1 And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth: and to him was given the key of the bottomless pit.

2 And he opened the bottomless pit; and there arose a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit.

3 And there came out of the smoke locusts upon the earth: and unto them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power.

4 And it was commanded them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree; but only those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads.

5 And to them it was given that they should not kill them, but that they should be tormented five months: and their torment *was* as the torment of a scorpion, when he striketh a man.

6 And in those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them.

7 And the shapes of the locusts *were* like unto horses prepared unto battle; and on their heads *were* as it were crowns like gold, and their faces *were* as the faces of men.

8 And they had hair as the hair of women, and their teeth were as the *teeth* of lions.

9 And they had breastplates, as it were breastplates of iron; and the sound of their wings *was* as the sound of chariots of many horses running to battle.

10 And they had tails like unto scorpions, and there were stings in their tails: and their power *was* to hurt men five months.

11 And they had a king over them, *which* is the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in the Hebrew tongue *is* Abaddon, but in the Greek tongue hath *his* name Apollyon.

12 One woe is past; *and*, behold, there come two woes more hereafter.

Ver. 1. *And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth.*] By the symbol of a fallen star, the Antichrist of the last days, it has been observed,* is represented in the Old Testament; and it may be amongst other considerations, by reason of his relation to Satan, whose great incarnation he will be, and of whose precipitation, at length, from the heavens, which he now infests, we are fully assured by the word of prophecy. The actual vision, to this effect, is given in chap. xii. of this book. But we also find it anticipatively described by our blessed Lord, on the occasion of the return of the seventy disciples, when they reported, amongst the features of success which had attended their mission, that “even the devils were subject unto them through His name.” Luke x. 17. Then, said Jesus unto them, “I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven,” that is, His heart went with them whilst they

* See page 28.

prosecuted their work. And in *every* expulsion of evil spirits from the bodies of men, He recognised an earnest of the dethronement of their great Leader. It is a like exercise of our Lord's faith, penetrating into and realizing the future, which we have recorded in John xii. 31, where the enquiry after Him by the Greeks, leading to the contemplation of His approaching passion, He exclaims: "Now is the judgment of this world; now shall the prince of this world be cast out."

Such catastrophe, however, having been already sustained by Satan *prior* to the events here presented to us, (for, as has been submitted, the day of the Lord begins with this,) why, it may be enquired, is its occurrence now introduced under the fifth trumpet? To this it is replied—in order to connect the agency of this exasperated adversary with the torment which is about to be inflicted on the apostate Jews. The casting down of Satan and his hosts had been accomplished before; but it is here brought into view, under this vision, that it may be seen through what medium the Divine wisdom sees fit to execute His wrath. Nor does the language of the vision present a difficulty to this, it rather favours it. For, in the original it is,—
"I saw a star *fallen* from heaven," not "fall from heaven," as though a scene *then transacting*. It is not the present tense that is used, but the past. By this symbol, also, it is not necessary that we

should identify the person of *Satan*. It is sufficient if we recognise one of his *satellites* as intended, through whom he acts. The reader will, of course, observe, that in this transfer of the symbol from the Antichrist, of whom we have before interpreted it, its unity of meaning is still preserved. Belonging, as it does, primarily to Satan, it is naturally applicable to his allies and agents.

And to him was given the key of the bottomless pit.] Of course, we are not to suppose that a literal key is intended here, but that the wicked angel who is cast down, has authority to open the bottomless pit; and of this the key given him is an emblem. The expression, “the bottomless pit,” is literally, “the pit of the abyss,” and denotes the place of confinement for wicked spirits.

We see this by turning to the 8th of Luke. We there read of the evil spirits which possessed a certain demoniac, that after challenging the Lord Jesus not to torment them *before the time*, (*i.e.*, doubtless the time of their formal judgment which they knew had not then arrived,) “they besought him that he would not command them to go out into the deep,” *i.e.*, literally, *the abyss*, the same term which is used here. v. 31. Nor were they consigned thither, but their own alternative was assented to, that they should enter into the herd of swine, there feeding; upon which, it is said, “the herd ran violently down a steep place

into the lake, and were choked." Thus, it appears, that these wicked spirits apprehended their being sentenced to confinement in the abyss; and wherefore? Because they knew that such was the place of banishment, to which, with their leader, they are to be consigned for a season. See Rev. xx. 1—3. But, at the period to which the vision relates, who are the tenants of this dark abode, for whose egress it is opened? This is an important preliminary question, to the determining the import of the locust vision which follows. And, surely, on this point the information ought not to be lost upon us, which is furnished in the epistle of Jude and 2 Peter, concerning the angels that sinned in connection with the flood,—that "God cast them down to hell,* and hath reserved them in everlasting chains, under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day." 2 Pet. ii. 4, Jude 6. Here, it is obvious, are formidable agents which may be let loose for a season, to serve the Divine purpose of judgment.


Ver. 2. *And he opened the bottomless pit : and there arose a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace.*] Beneath the outer crust of the earth inflammable materials are known to exist,

* Literally, hurled them into Tartarus. According to the Heathen, this was "*the lowest and darkest part of the infernal regions, the prison of the Titans,*"—a general description which sufficiently answers to the import of the scriptural term—the abyss.

which the access of air frequently excites into combustion. Hence, the sudden opening of any great cavity in the earth may be conceived to give vent to a gush of subterranean fire. This may naturally apply, then, to the present case. But, further, the abyss here being that of incarcerated fiends, the kind of preliminary eruption from it when opened, may well be described as partaking of *their* characteristic properties who are about to follow. Accordingly, as it is said, v. 17, that out of the mouths of the locusts, as the latter are called, “issued *fire and smoke*,” we read now of the same discharge being poured forth, in this initiatory scene.

And the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit.] This, again, is in keeping, not only with the foul character of these infernal agencies, but with the symbol by which they are described—*locusts*: for, when such voracious insects appear, as they frequently do, in the East, ravaging the whole vegetable surface of the land, it is recorded by travellers that they darken the air by their numbers. And so we read of the plague of locusts which God inflicted upon the Egyptians, that “they covered the face of the whole earth, so that *the land was darkened*.” Ex. x. 15.

Ver. 3. *And there came out of the smoke locusts upon the earth.*] The locusts here spoken of cannot



be natural locusts. As we proceed with the description, we shall see this.

And unto them was given power.] Thus, these emissaries of evil, with all their malice, can do nothing except as they are permitted by God. It is with them as with Satan, who could not molest Job till the Divine fiat was uttered: "Behold, all that he hath is in thy power." Job i. 12. A hedge had indeed been made by God around His servant, so that the roaring lion ravened in vain against him; and, when he was allowed to get an opening in this hedge, it was only that God might serve Himself of the assailant. Hence, it has been well said, "*the Devil is a sustained witness for God.*"

As the scorpions of the earth have power.] That is, to injure by stinging, as is more explicitly stated afterwards. The qualification in the comparison—"scorpions of the earth," we can recognize to be called for, because, as we have seen, these agents are not of the earth, but, as we may say, of hell.

Ver. 4. *And it was commanded them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree.*] Let it be here observed, that these are the very productions of the earth which natural locusts devour. Their reservation, therefore, from damage, is an intimation at the outset, that they are not natural locusts which are represented in this vision.

But only those men which have not the seal of

God in their foreheads.] Here, again, is an anomaly in the way of understanding natural locusts as intended ; for it is man's *food*, the fruit of the earth, which is obnoxious to the incursions of such creatures, not man himself. Moreover, to the effect on the human subject, a further limitation is set. They alone are to be injured who have not the seal of God in their foreheads. This leads us back to the 7th chapter, where the number of the sealed of every tribe is recounted—evidently the same parties who are here exempted from torment. Thus the Lord will put a difference between the faithful and the ungodly. It will be, as when the destroying angel slew the first-born in every house in Egypt, but passed over the dwellings of the Israelites, marked out as they were by the sprinkled blood. Heb.xi.; see Ezek.ix.

Ver. 5. *And to them it was given, that they should not kill them.*] The Divine commission is thus clearly stamped upon the employment of these instruments of Judgment. Malicious, and altogether destructive in intent, as we may conceive them to be,—witness the evil spirits that entered into the swine, how they immediately hurried the whole herd headlong into the sea, so that they perished (Luke viii. 33),—yet can they do nothing without the Divine permission ; and in this case, we see a restriction is put upon them,—“ they shall not *kill*.”

But that they should be tormented five months.] Here is specified, the limit to which the commission of these fiends extends; namely, inflicting *torment*; and the length of time, assigned to their operations, is in keeping with the symbol of locusts, by which they are described. For “*five months*” is about the period during which these creatures swarm in the East,—viz., from April to September.

And their torment was as the torment of a scorpion, when he striketh a man.] That is, their victims shall suffer from them as from the sting of a scorpion:—a wingless insect, whose attack is much dreaded, and is sometimes fatal to life.

An ancient writer thus describes the effect of their wound: “When the scorpion has stung, the place becomes inflamed and hardened; it reddens by tension, and is painful by intervals, being now chilly, now burning. The pain soon rises high, and rages sometimes more, sometimes less. A sweating succeeds, attended by a shivering and trembling; the extremities become cold; the groin swells; the hair stands on end; the visage becomes pale; and throughout the skin there is the sensation of perpetual prickling, as if by needles.”*

Perhaps it is to the plague under this trumpet, of which we may thus conceive, that Moses refers, in his recital to the children of Israel of the consequences of their disobedience: “The

Lord shall smite thee in the knees, and in the legs, with a sore botch that cannot be healed, from the sole of thy foot unto the top of thy head." Deut. xxviii. 35.

In the Prophet Jeremiah, also, there seems a similar allusion:—"Behold, I will send serpents, cockatrices, among you, which will not be charmed, and they shall bite you, saith the Lord." Jer. viii. 17.

Ver. 6. *And in those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it: and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them.*] We read of the anguish of Saul, of old, when he felt that God had forsaken him, and that the Philistines were prevailing against him; and under the influence of this, *he* sought death, and found it by his own hand. But, here, to whatever of similar remorse there may be in the consciences of the wicked, aggravated by the festering of their tormented bodies, will be added that, unlike him, they will, in vain, "seek death" and "desire to die:" the relief of death shall be denied them, in order, as it seems, to ensure their endurance of the appointed plague.

To the same effect we read in the prophet Jeremiah, concerning those wicked Jews who shall not have returned to their land,—for upon them, also, it appears, that sore judgments shall come:—"And death shall be chosen rather than life by

all the residue of them that remain of this evil family, which remain in all the places whither I have driven them, saith the Lord of hosts." Jer. viii. 3.

Ver. 7. *And the shapes of the locusts were like unto horses prepared unto battle.*] So imposing and irresistible will be the aspect of these hosts of darkness. For thus the war horse is described in scripture:—"The glory of his nostrils is terrible. He paweth in the valley, and rejoiceth in his strength: he goeth on to meet the armed men. He mocketh at fear, and is not affrighted; neither turneth he back from the sword. The quiver rattleth against him, the glittering spear and the shield. He swalloweth the ground with fierceness and rage." Job xxxix. 20—24.

And on their heads were as it were crowns like gold.] An assailant may be mighty, but yet he may appear mean and ignoble: and thus, his intimidating influence may so far fail in effect. But such drawback will not attend the march of these mysterious bands. Their intimidation of the wicked, against whom they are sent will be complete. To the invincible energy of the war horse—addressing itself to the grosser fears of human nature—they will unite the imperious air of kings, exacting submission as they advance. To betoken this, it may be that they are here represented as wearing the emblems of royalty.

And their faces were as the faces of men.] This, perhaps, indicates that in their career of mischief and terror, there will be presented the aggravating feature of *intelligence*—aggravating, as suggesting that all human devices of escape, on the part of their victims, must be at once penetrated and seen through. Manhood can meet manhood's guile.

Ver. 8. *And they had hair as the hair of women.*] This may be to combine ignominy with every stroke of torment which they inflict. For, in the first place, to be vanquished by the weaker sex has always been regarded by men as an intolerable disgrace. Hence, we read in the book of Judges of Abimelech, when wounded by a certain woman of Thebez, who cast a stone upon him, calling to his armour-bearer to draw his sword and slay him, that it might not be said of him, "*a woman slew him.*" Judges ix. 54.* Secondly, nothing is more characteristic of women than their long hair; at least, this is the judgment of scripture, as may be gathered from the language of the Apostle Paul:—"Doth not even nature itself teach you, that, if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him? But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her: for her hair is given her for a covering." 1 Cor. xi. 14, 15.

And their teeth were as the teeth of lions.] Thus will they exhibit the utmost *ferocity* in their

* See, also, Judges iv. 9.

appearance; for, of all beasts of prey, the lion is the strongest and fiercest, and his teeth proportionably terrifying to the spectator. See Joel i. 6.

Ver. 9. *And they had breastplates as it were breastplates of iron.*] This betokens their invulnerability; the “*breastplate*” being the most imposing piece of defensive armour used in ancient times; and “*iron*,” the hardest of metals.

And the sound of their wings was as the sound of chariots of many horses running to battle.] As warfare was conducted of old, nothing excited more consternation than the rushing of the war chariots which carried the combatants into close fight, and whence were discharged all sorts of darts and missive weapons. Accordingly, we find the frightful noise of such engines referred to by the prophet Nahum, in connexion with the alarm proclaimed against Nineveh:—“The noise of a whip, and the noise of the rattling of the wheels, and of the pransing horses, and of the jumping chariots.” Nahum iii. 2. Here, then, this accompaniment of terror, affecting the ear, will aggravate what flashes upon the eye; the sound being produced by the rustling of the wings of this terrible host. And this feature of their description is in consonance with the properties of locusts—after which they are denominated in this vision,—for it is reported of such creatures that the noise

of their wings is heard at the distance of several miles.

Ver. 10. *And they had tails like unto scorpions, and there were stings in their tails.*] The tail of the scorpion, a genus of wingless insects, as has been observed on ver. 5, is described by zoologists precisely to this effect. They relate that it is long and slender, ending in a pointed weapon, or, sting.

And their power was to hurt men,] or, more literally, *the men*, as in ver. 6,—namely, those “who have not the seal of God in their foreheads.” See on ver. 4. And it is a fact that the sting of scorpions, especially the larger sort, which are found in tropical climates, is very venemous—sometimes fatal to life.

Five months.] See on ver. 5.

Ver. 11. *And they had a king over them.*] It is said, in Scripture, that “*the locusts have no king.*” Prov. xxx. 27. Hence, in this clause, we have a further indication that natural locusts are not intended; though, doubtless, from this name being given them, we should gather, that the *locust* form is that which predominates in the monstrous aspect assumed by these evil spirits.

Which is the angel of the bottomless pit.] That is, the pit of the abyss—the receptacle before-named. Ver. 1, 2. The leadership of the fiends, who thence issue forth upon their work of torment, is assumed, it appears, by the same agent that has

been suffered to let them loose—a fallen spirit subordinate to Satan (see on ver. 1); or, possibly, he may be one of the liberated fiends themselves, the chief in dignity among them before they sinned; and now the same precedence is again accorded to him.

Whose name in the Hebrew tongue is Abaddon.] This may mean, that, in the Old Testament Scriptures, such party is pointed at, however obscurely, wherever the word (אֲבַדּוֹן), thus pronounced *Abaddon*, occurs—which is uniformly rendered by our Translators, *destruction*. See Job xxvi. 6, xxviii. 22, xxxiv. 12; Ps. lxxxviii. 11; Prov. xv. 11; Prov. xxvii. 20. These are all the passages in which the term is found; and, it is observable, that, in most of them, it is emphatically associated with the word “hell,” or hades, which—however used in some places, in the Hebrew, to denote simply *the grave*—yet, more frequently, denotes the region of departed spirits. If then we may suppose that the Arch-Fiend, Satan—who has the power of death, and exults over the dissolution of soul and body—regards this region as part of his domain; may he not be conceived of, as having assigned it, of old, to the rule of one of his angels; and thus the place and the dark warden of it, come to be mentioned together. In this way HELL (or Hades) AND DESTRUCTION, in the Old Testament, would seem to be somewhat

akin to THE PIT OF THE ABYSS AND ITS ANGEL, in the New.

That these receptacles, however differing in purport and character, are, in a manner, combined into one sphere of Satanic rule, may be collected from the question of the Apostle :—" Who shall descend into the deep ?" (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead). Rom. x. 7. For the word here rendered, " the deep," is, literally, *the abyss*. And, what this descending into the abyss, had to do with our Lord's resurrection—a question that naturally suggests itself—is thus perhaps satisfactorily resolved. The abyss was the proper seat of the Evil Spirit, who, as it were, brooded over Hades ; and, therefore, deliverance from Hades may be said to have involved the discomfiture of this power of darkness.

But in the Greek tongue hath his name Apollyon.] Perhaps, this signifies that, in the New Testament, wherever we observe the word thus pronounced, which means DESTROYER, associated with malicious designs against human life, we should identify this Evil One from the pit as the primary though unseen agent. Thus, when we read of Herod " seeking the young Child to *destroy* him ;" of the Pharisees " holding a council to *destroy* Jesus ;" of " the chief priests and elders persuading the multitude that they should ask Barabbas and *destroy* Jesus ;" of the evil spirit's effort " to

destroy” the lunatic child, by casting him into the fire and into the water ; of the design of the strange shepherd “ to steal, to kill, and to *destroy*”—in all which passages, the verbal form of the very word *Apollyon* is that which is used, we should trace the mischief, in question, to this diabolical source.

Such is the designation of the malignant being, who, under Satan, his great head, has always revelled in the work of mischief, according as he has had opportunity, and who, no doubt, even now, burns for this appointed crisis, when he may lead on his hosts of darkness.

Ver. 12. *One woe is past.*] With this solemn utterance, closes the fearful scene just depicted ; and before the next is introduced, a similar note of alarm is sounded, as follows :—

And behold there come two woes more hereafter.] This implies that the woe already inflicted has not produced the desired effect ; therefore, it is that those further threatened, now succeed.

But, before we proceed with the subject, one word of reflection for the Christian reader. Here are Satanic legions going forth to torment—if they could, to destroy men’s lives ! What a contrast with the design of Him who came to save—who, when on earth, ministered to every human want, and now, in His members, dispenses blessings to a weary world—an earnest of that

benignant sway which He will yet exercise throughout the bounds of creation ! Truly, the ways of the Son of God are here commended to us in contrast with those of him who was “ a murderer from the beginning ; ” and, no doubt, the mischievous agency of the latter, in this instance as in all others, is intended to exhibit, in strong relief, the beneficence of the Saviour, throwing an emphatic meaning into that word which He uttered in the days of His flesh—“ Ye are from beneath ; I am from above.” John viii. 23.

Moreover, is it the nature of wicked spirits to kill and to destroy ; and are we surrounded by such ? Whence then our protection, but in our Emmanuel, who is a sun and shield, and whose angel “ encampeth round about them that fear Him and delivereth them.” Ps. xxxiv. 7.

Feb. 22. 1857

CHAPTER IX.

SECTION SECOND.

Verses 13—21.

13 And the sixth angel sounded, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God.

14 Saying to the sixth angel which had the trumpet, Loose the four angels which are bound in the great river Euphrates.

15 And the four angels were loosed, which were prepared for an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year, for to slay the third part of men.

16 And the number of the army of the horsemen *were* two hundred thousand thousand: and I heard the number of them.

17 And thus I saw the horses in the vision, and them that sat on them, having breast-plates of fire, and of jacinth, and brimstone: and the heads of the horses *were* as the heads of lions; and out of their mouths issued fire and smoke and brimstone.

18 By these three was the third part of men killed, by the fire, and by the smoke, and by the brimstone, which issued out of their mouths.

19 For their power is in their mouth, and in their tails: for their tails *were* like unto serpents, and had heads, and with them they do hurt.

20 And the rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues yet repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood: which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk:

21 Neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts.

Ver. 13. *And the sixth angel sounded, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God.*] As a commission of further judgment against the Jewish people, in their land, is now about to be pronounced by God, attention is here drawn to the quarter whence it issues, even the golden altar of incense—to signify that such judgment is by way of continued answer to the prayers still ascending from the faithful remnant already represented in ch. viii. 3, 4.*

No doubt, we have, in the Psalms, examples furnished of the prayer which will then prevail.

* See vol. ii., page 16.

The following may be adduced:—"Oh, let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end." Ps. vii. 9. "Why standest thou afar off, O Lord? Why hidest thou thyself in times of trouble? The wicked in his pride doth persecute the poor, let them be taken in the devices that they have imagined. Arise, O Lord; O God, lift up thine hand: forget not the humble. . . . Break thou the arm of the wicked and the evil man." Ps. x. 1, 2, 12, 15. "Judge me, O God, and plead my cause against an ungodly nation; O deliver me from the deceitful and unjust man." Ps. xliii. 1. "Awake, why sleepest thou, O Lord? arise, cast us not off for ever. . . . Arise for our help, and redeem us for thy mercies' sake." Ps. xliv. 23, 26. "O God, how long shall the adversary reproach? shall the enemy blaspheme thy name for ever? Why withdrawest thou thy hand, even thy right hand? pluck it out of thy bosom. . . . O let not the oppressed return ashamed: let the poor and needy praise thy name. Arise, O God, plead thine own cause: remember how the foolish man reproacheth thee daily. Forget not the voice of thine enemies: the tumult of those that rise up against thee increaseth continually." Ps. lxxiv. 10, 11, 21—23. "O my God, make them like a wheel; as the stubble before the wind. As the fire burneth a wood, and as the flame setteth the mountains on fire, so persecute them with thy

tempest, and make them afraid with thy storm. Fill their faces with shame; that they may seek thy name, O Lord. Let them be confounded and troubled for ever; yea, let them be put to shame, and perish; that men may know that thou, whose name alone is Jehovah, art the Most High over all the earth." Ps. lxxxiii. 13—18. "O Lord God, to whom vengeance belongeth; O God, to whom vengeance belongeth, shew thyself. Lift up thyself, thou judge of the earth; render a reward to the proud. Lord, how long shall the wicked, how long shall the wicked triumph? How long shall they utter and speak hard things? and all the workers of iniquity boast themselves? They break in pieces thy people, O Lord, and afflict thine heritage. They slay the widow and the stranger, and murder the fatherless. Yet they say, The Lord shall not see, neither shall the God of Jacob regard it." Ps. xciv. 1—7.

By such cryings as these, from the faithful remnant, in the land, amidst their apostate nation, we may well conceive, according to the vision before us, that the Lord is moved; and that He at length answers them in righteousness, by the "terrible things" here rehearsed. Hence, then, the signal for renewed judgment comes as a voice from the golden altar, the place of prevailing intercession; and in the original, it is remarkable, the word is "*one* voice," as though the united result

of the many prayers that are offered in this behalf. See also Rom. xi. 2, 3, and James v. 17.

But, as “the four horns” of this altar are particularly specified, perhaps we should look for some further import to be thus conveyed to us. And, here it is worthy of remark, that, on the day of atonement, when Israel, as a nation, renewed their reconciliation with God, and also on the occasion of any sin through ignorance, involving the High Priest, or the whole congregation, it was ordained of God, as part of the ritual to be observed for His propitiation, that, of the sacrifice offered, some of the blood should be put upon this very appurtenance of the Tabernacle :—“The priest shall put some of the blood upon the horns of the altar of sweet incense.” Lev. iv. 7, 18. See also ch. xvi. 18. And that this ordinance had a special aspect towards sin, as committed by the congregation collectively, or its great representative Functionary, appears from this,—that, in other cases for which the Divine mercy was provided, whether the sin of an ordinary ruler, or any of the common people, the blood of atonement was put, not upon the horns of the golden altar, but upon those of “*the altar of burnt offering*.” See Lev. iv. 25, 34. When, therefore, the prelude to an infliction of wrath upon this same people is found—as in the vision before us—to consist of a voice “from the four horns of the golden altar,” may it not be to indicate that

the great national sin of Israel—however committed in ignorance—the rejection of their Messiah, is still uncanceled, and that therefore “the anger of God is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still.” Isaiah x. 4.

Thus introduced, may not the severe plagues which follow, be associated by the sufferers, with humbling recollections of their forefathers’ awful cry, “His blood be on us and on our children.” Mat. xxvii. 25. In fact, combining this recognition of the bloodguiltiness of Israel, with the prayers for judgment, of the faithful and oppressed remnant already noticed, we seem to have, as the full burden of this vision, the blood of Messiah crying against the apostate nation, like that of Abel against his murderer Cain.

Ver. 14. *Saying to the sixth angel which had the trumpet, Loose the four angels which are bound in the great river Euphrates.*] This is preparatory to another incursion of evil spirits, which is presently described. We had “four angels” shown to us, in the seventh chapter, as having to do with the four winds of the earth; but they are not represented as under restraint like the angels here, but awaiting God’s signal to execute His will. Moreover, their agency is *to delay* disaster till God’s chosen ones are sealed; whereas, the agency of these is immediately attended with disaster, as its sure concomitant; and they are only withheld from

inflicting it by a superior power—a fit characteristic, this, of the fellow-workers of him whom we have seen called “**ABADDON, THE DESTROYER.**” Their very liberty is fatal to life ; and so impatient are they to wreak their fury on their victims, that they must be *bound*, in order to suspend the stroke till the appointed season. Hence, there can be no doubt of these being *evil* angels ; and God knows how to employ such to subserve His righteous anger.*

They are “*bound in*,” or, rather, “*at the great river Euphrates.*” This signifies, that from that region, the destructive enemies of Israel—presently enumerated—march against Jerusalem. And in this association, the Euphrates is spoken of in Old Testament prophecy. For example, where the prophet Isaiah proclaims the retribution which the rejection of the government of the true line of David (and the person of Messiah is ultimately pointed at) would surely bring upon the guilty nation, he uses these remarkable words : “ Behold the Lord bringeth up upon them the waters of the river, strong and many, even the king of Assyria, and all his glory : and he shall come up over all his channels, and go over all his banks : And he shall pass through Judah ; he shall overflow and go over, he shall reach even to the neck ; and the stretching out of his wings shall fill the breadth of thy land, O Immanuel.” Isa. viii. 7, 8. Here the

* See Psalm lxxviii. 49.

Assyrian forces—and led on by a greater than Sennacherib, even his antitype, the Antichrist of the last days—are evidently intended by the waters of the river, *i. e.* the Euphrates, often called, by reason of its magnitude, *the river*. And that, from this quarter, there will arise a combination of fierce invaders of Jerusalem, in the latter day, is plain from other prophecies which make Babylon, seated as it is upon the Euphrates, the centre of mischief to the Jewish people. Thus, Hab. i. 6—11, which has been already referred to.* And in Jeremiah we read: “Out of the north” (and be it observed, Babylon lay north of Jerusalem) “an evil shall break forth upon all the inhabitants of the land. For, lo, I will call all the families of the kingdoms of the north, saith the Lord; and they shall come, and they shall set every one his throne at the entering of the gates of Jerusalem, and against all the walls thereof round about, and against all the cities of Judah. And I will utter my judgments against them touching all their wickedness, who have forsaken me, and have burned incense unto other gods, and worshipped the works of their own hands.” Jer. i. 14—16. Again, “evil appeareth out of the north, and great destruction.” Jer. vi. 1. See also Jer. xxv. 26, Isa. xiv. 31, Joel ii. 20.

Ver. 15. *And the four angels were loosed, which were prepared for an hour, and a day, and a month,*

* Vol. i. p. 321.

and a year, for to slay the third part of men.] The trumpet angel having executed the commission assigned to him, the four evil angels are left free to act. And now we are informed that they (including, we may presume, the hosts into which they merge as the vision proceeds) had been reserved in readiness (of course, by God) for a work of slaughter amongst his enemies, even “*the men*” before alluded to, as not having the seal of God in their foreheads. A third part of these are now to be slain. All of them had been *tormented* under the former judgment: *now*, this proportion of them shall suffer *death* in its most terrifying form.

The *period*, also, as well as the purpose for which this fatal agency was prepared, is defined, and with minute detail, as though even a repetition of a duration appointed or spoken of before,—“for *the* hour, and day, and month, and year.” Such is the strict rendering of the original. These terms are not to be taken as expressive of concentric periods of time, but continuously; just as in the famous chronological prophecy of Daniel, the “seven weeks,” and “three score and two weeks,” and “one week,” combine to make up the seventy weeks first spoken of. Thus, the aggregate of the periods here named is three hundred and ninety days,* a day, and an hour; within which time,

* In this reduction of the year and month into days, the lunar year, that is, twelve times thirty days, and thirty days for the odd

it appears, the work of slaughter will go on in Jerusalem. No doubt there is a reason for the duration being given here in such distinct portions, even to intimate that to each will be allotted its respective event in that terrific crisis. But where, it may be asked, had such a duration been appointed, or spoken of before, as implied in the foregoing use of the article, "*the hour,*" &c.? For an answer to this, let us turn to Ezekiel. The prophet is commanded to go through a symbolical rehearsal of a siege of Jerusalem; and amongst other observances prescribed, is his lying upon his side for "*three hundred and ninety days,*" the significancy of which is clearly conveyed to us in these words:—"Behold, I will lay bands upon thee, and thou shalt not turn thee from one side to another till thou hast ended the days of thy siege." Ezek. iv. 8. For so many years, it seems, is the house of Israel regarded by God as having provoked Him by their iniquity; and, answering thereto, it is here prophesied, that the nation in Jerusalem shall undergo the anguish and extremity of a siege, in which the most revolting means will have to be resorted to for the preservation of life. Now, the only siege of which it is month, has been taken as that intended. Nor can there be any doubt of the correctness of this estimate, when we see, in the course of this book, that three years and a half resolve themselves into forty and two months, and twelve hundred and sixty days. This allows just three hundred and sixty days for a year, and thirty days for a month. See Rev. xi. 2, 3.

attempted by Commentators to interpret this memorable prophecy, is the siege of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, in the reign of Zedekiah. But it happens most remarkably, as though to provide against such attempts, that we have three several accounts in scripture of that siege, as to when it began and ended, and they all correspond in making the duration of it to be not *three hundred and ninety days*, but *five hundred and forty days*, or a year and a half! For example, it is thus recorded in the prophet Jeremiah:—"In the ninth year of Zedekiah king of Judah, in the tenth month, came Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and all his army against Jerusalem, and they besieged it. And in the eleventh year of Zedekiah, in the fourth month, the ninth day of the month, the city was broken up." Jer. xxxix. 1, 2. See also 2 Kings xxv. 1, and Jer. lii. 4.

To harmonize these dates with the prophecy in Ezekiel, it is alleged, indeed, that there was an interval during which the Chaldeans raised the siege of Jerusalem, to repulse the diversion made in its favour by the king of Egypt; (see Jer. xxxvii. 11) and that this should be deducted from the computation in Jeremiah. But, besides that the latter presents no indication that such interval was designed to be deducted, how can this interval be determined to amount to just *five months*, the complement in question? It cannot

be done. The only expedient, therefore, of Commentators, is to *suppose* what is convenient to their notion, and then affirm it to their readers as *fact*. This is the course pursued by the most respectable of them, adding, in some cases, a scripture reference, which the reader naturally expects to be satisfactory, but when he turns to it, he is surprised, as well he may be, to find the assertion quite unsustained.*

This alleged fulfilment of Ezekiel's three hundred and ninety days siege of Jerusalem, being thus disposed of, it only remains to suggest to the reader, that this, like many other forestalled interpretations of prophecy, relates to the future, when the Jews having returned to their land, and filling up the measure of their iniquity, by aggravated apostacy from God, He will consummate his indignation against them, by letting loose upon them a mixed confederacy of men and demons. This trumpet vision describes the latter, who will besiege Jerusalem, for the very period specified, three hundred and ninety days, or a month and a year, the event being fatal to a considerable number of the guilty—even a third part.

It is admitted, that, in this interpretation, no

* "The siege of Jerusalem is computed to last eighteen months, (Jer. lii. 4—6) but if we deduct from that five months interval, when the besiegers withdrew upon the approach of Pharaoh's army, (Jer. xxxvii. 5—8) the number of the days of the close siege will be three hundred and ninety."—MATTHEW HENRY on Ezek. iv. 1—8.

significancy has been assigned to the supplement of "*the hour and day*," which belongs to the main period, three hundred and ninety days. But, let it be observed that the duration defined in Ezekiel, belongs only to the process of the siege ; whereas, supposing such siege to be contemplated under this trumpet vision, it is manifest, that it is followed out to its consequences, in the carnage of "*the third part of the men.*" May not the extension of the time, then, in this latter case, be framed accordingly, so as to include this dire sequel ? For the ravages of a victorious army for one day would yield the proportion of slain here mentioned ; whilst the occupation of an additional solitary hour in the same way, and then the termination of this bloody work, would just indicate what it may be God's purpose should be recognized—that as the judgment, so its sudden cessation has come from Him.

Having thus synchronized this vision, with the gathering together of numerous armies to besiege Jerusalem in the latter day, it may be well that I should here bring before the reader, the very similar allusions to such event from Old Testament prophecy.

And, first, let us consult the Prophet Ezekiel. After naming numerous Gentile powers ; and some of them, emphatically, from the regions of *the north*, " with horses and horsemen, all of them clothed with all sorts of armour, even a great

company with bucklers, and shields, all of them handling swords," God thus addresses them, by his inspired servant:—"Be thou prepared, and prepare for thyself, thou, and all thy company that are assembled unto thee, and be thou a guard unto them. After many days thou shalt be visited." Now, if we conceive of these armies of nations, as in some way represented by the quaternion of angels who have their place by the Euphrates, (Satan's princes, as it were, presiding over these regions,) the restraint of the latter, whilst yet prepared for the career of judgment before them, seems not a little to correspond with the purport of this Divine charge. The Prophet proceeds:—"In the latter years thou shalt come into the land, that is brought back from the sword, and is gathered out of many people,* against the mountains of Israel, which have been always waste; but it is brought forth out of the nations, and they shall dwell safely all of them. Thou shalt ascend and come like a storm; thou shalt be like a cloud to cover the land, thou and all thy bands, and many people with thee. Thus saith the Lord God: It shall also come to pass, that at the same time shall things come into thy mind, and thou shalt think an evil thought: And

* The above seems no obscure intimation that the possession of Palestine becoming first a source of strife among the dynasties of Europe, will, afterwards, as an adjustment of their difficulties, be ceded to her own children.

thou shalt say, I will go up to the land of un-walled villages; I will go to them that are at rest, that dwell safely, all of them dwelling without walls, and having neither bars nor gates, to take a spoil, and to take a prey; to turn thine hand upon the desolate places that are now inhabited, and upon the people that are gathered out of the nations, which have gotten cattle and goods, that dwell in the midst of the land. . . . And thou shalt come from thy place *out of the north parts*, thou, and many people with thee, all of them *riding upon horses*, a great company, and a mighty army: and thou shalt come up against my people of Israel, as a cloud to cover the land; it shall be *in the latter days*, and I will bring thee against my land, that the heathen may know me, when I shall be sanctified in thee, O Gog, before their eyes.” Ezek. xxxviii. 4, 7—16.

Of the foregoing sentences, those put in italics will be seen by the reader to supply points of coincidence with “*the army of horsemen*” in the Revelation. But the following verse appears still more significant as intimating, that, like these latter forces, the Prophet’s mighty army has been in the Divine view, from of old, for the chastisement of rebellious Israel:—“Thus saith the Lord God, Art thou he of whom I have spoken in old time by my servants the prophets of Israel, which prophesied in those days many years that I would bring thee against them?” Ver. 17.

Again, we read in the Prophet Isaiah :—" He will lift up an ensign from afar, and will hiss unto them from the end of the earth : and, behold, they shall come with speed swiftly : none shall be weary nor stumble among them ; none shall slumber nor sleep ; neither shall the girdle of their loins be loosed, nor the latchet of their shoes be broken : whose arrows are sharp, and all their bows bent, their horses' hoofs shall be counted like flint, and their wheels like a whirlwind : their roaring shall be like a lion, they shall roar like young lions : yea, they shall roar, and lay hold of the prey, and shall carry it away safe, and none shall deliver it." Isaiah v. 26—29.

Here, in like manner, is rehearsed the assembling, at the Divine summons, of an invincible and terrifying army—possessed of manifestly supernatural energy and resources—against Israel's land ; of which land also, it is added, corresponding as we have seen to the history of the trumpet visitations upon that people : " And if one look unto it, behold darkness and sorrow, and the light is darkened in the heavens thereof." Ver. 30.

The eventful siege of Jerusalem by all nations predicted in the Prophet Zechariah, will also occur to the reader, as harmonizing with the preceding descriptions (see Zech. xii. and xiv.) ; whilst with all these, and especially the visions in

the chapter before us, that of the locusts, and the Euphratean horsemen, the details of the Prophet Joel are in striking unison. For, here we have the Jews in their own land, and their invasion by all nations, especially by those mysterious agents (from the *north* also) of whom it is said, "*There hath not been ever the like, neither shall be any more after it ;*"—by these Jerusalem is captured, and the solemn call to repentance urged upon her guilty inhabitants. Confining the further comparison, however, to the description of Joel and the Apocalypse, the following parallelism between these two may be left to close the subject, at least under its present head.

Revelation ix.

"*The sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit.*" ver. 2.

"*And he opened the bottomless pit ; . . . and there came out . . . locusts upon the earth.*" ver. 3.

"*The four angels which are bound at the great river Euphrates.*" ver. 14.

"*The shapes of the locusts were like unto horses prepared unto battle.*" ver. 7.

"*And the number of the army of the horsemen,*" &c. ver. 16.

"*The sound of their wings was as the sound of chariots of many horses running to battle.*" ver. 9.

Joel ii.

"*A day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness*" ver. 2.

"*A great people and a strong : there hath not been ever the like.*" ver. 2.

The northern army.

"*The appearance of them was the appearance of horses.*" ver. 4.

"*Like the noise of chariots on the tops of mountains shall they leap.*" ver. 5.

In the above comparison with the Prophet Joel, both the visions in this 9th chapter,—that of the “locusts,” and of the Euphratean horsemen,—have been continued together in one view; and, this seems absolutely necessary to the adjustment of the general harmony, which, at once, commends itself to our notice, so far as the locust vision only is concerned. For, one prominent feature of Joel’s “*army*” is their devastating progress, laying waste the fruits of the earth. “The land,” says the Prophet, “is as the garden of Eden before them, and behind them a desolate wilderness.” Joel ii. 3. Whereas, in John’s vision of the “locusts,” we have seen that it was commanded them—“that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, nor any tree, but only those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads.” ver. 4. This discrepancy, it is obvious, can only be reconciled by the supposition adopted, that the Spirit, in Joel, contemplates the incursions of the *whole* fiendish host in this chapter; and that what is not true of the locust band will be verified in that of the Euphratean horsemen. And, with this supposition, the general aspect of Joel’s prophecy coincides; for, like Zechariah,* it appears as if his object was, not to be minute in his description of the future, but comprehensive, giving a summary

* Zech. xiv.

view of *all* the enemies, natural and supernatural, that will be let loose against Jerusalem in the latter day.

Such, I submit, is the ^{*}harmonizing conclusion which we should adopt in comparing the visions in question. Certainly super-natural assailants seem referred to in the following description of Joel:—“ *When they fall upon the sword, they shall not be wounded the earth shall quake before them, the heavens shall tremble.*” Joel ii. 8, 10.

Ver. 16. *And the number of the army of the horsemen were two hundred thousand thousand; and I heard the number of them.*] The transition from the mention of the four angels to that of this great army, suggests, as has been already observed, a sort of identification between the two; even that the latter are headed up in the former, as the instigators and leaders of the expedition. Thus, in the history of Job, we find, that when Satan was so far freed from restraint against God’s servant, the immediate consequence was an inroad of the Sabeans and Chaldeans, as though Satan’s mischievous agents held in leash for the purpose. Job i. 15—17.

The number of this cavalry host is immense beyond all precedent; and, in relation to the population of the whole earth, may appear incredible. But, with the precision of the enumeration

employed, and the Apostle's emphatic addition—*"I heard the number of them"*—we cannot suppose that any hyperbole of speech is intended. It is to be remembered, also, that these myriads, however mingled with ordinary assailants of earth, belong not themselves to such category; and we know not, therefore, how to compute either the consistency of their numbers relatively, or the space they may occupy. The simple course for the child of God is to believe, implicitly, what the Word of God declares.

Ver. 17. *And thus I saw the horses in the vision, and them that sat on them, having breast-plates of fire, and of jacinth, and brimstone.*] Having recited their number, the Apostle now proceeds to describe the terrifying aspect of both horses and riders. The latter have breastplates of fire—that is, perhaps, of a glowing red colour; but, they partake also of the combined hue of the jacinth (or hyacinth, a blue transparent mineral) and brimstone, which is yellow.

And the heads of the horses were as the heads of lions.] This and the other features of the Apostle's description, shew that these horses are, in their composition, *monsters*; the *shape* of the horse, however, predominating here, as that of the locusts in the former vision. Their heads, being as the heads of lions, indicate, we may conclude, fierceness of aspect.

And out of their mouths issued fire, and smoke, and brimstone.] This threefold exhalation is in keeping with the prominent appearance of the riders, as we have seen in the account of their breastplates. And both—harmonizing with the eruption from the abyss, accompanying the issue of the locusts (*evil spirits*)—argue that with such, these terrible agencies have *a kindred affinity*.

Ver. 18. *By these three (plagues) was the third part of (the) men killed, by the fire, and by the smoke, and by the brimstone, which issued out of their mouths.*] Such will be the proportion of the wicked inhabitants of Jerusalem, “*the men*” without God’s mark, who will perish under this judgment. And it appears that what will prove fatal to them will be the volcanic breath, as it were, of these monstrous horses, consuming them with fire.

May not this very agency be contemplated in many of the Old Testament prophecies, and the parables of the New, which specify *burning* as amongst the modes of retribution, wherewith God will avenge himself on his enemies in the latter day? (Isaiah iii. 24; iv. 4.) One passage, especially, may be referred to, where it is said:—(and in a context which expressly names “*sinner*s in Zion” as undergoing a visitation of judgment) “Ye shall conceive chaff; ye shall bring forth stubble: *your breath, as fire, shall devour you.*

And the people shall be as the burnings of lime." Isaiah xxxiii. 11, 12. Surely, this threatening remarkably corresponds with the scene before us. Again: whereas we have here a *third part* devoured by this plague of fire; on looking to the prophet Ezekiel's account, relative, as has been submitted,* to the same time, we find the following symbolical procedure, significant of the future, imposed upon the Prophet:—"And thou, son of man, take thee a sharp knife, take thee a barber's razor, and cause it to pass upon thine head, and upon thy beard; then take thee balances to weigh, and divide the hair. *Thou shalt burn with fire a third part in the midst of the city, when the days of the siege are fulfilled,*" Ezekiel v. 1, 2. This action, indicating, as it were, the dissolution of the Jewish people's Nazarite relationship to God, was obviously intended to portray one sad issue of the threatened siege of Jerusalem, even as the Prophet's recumbency on his side, pointed to the siege's duration. And, while this clause of Ezekiel's prophecy applies to the illustration of the Apocalypse, doubtless, with that immediately following, it supplies the *mode* by which, according to Zechariah's prophecy, "*two parts of the land shall be cut off and die.*" Zech. xiii. 8. For, that clause enjoins upon Ezekiel *the smiting about with a knife of another third part* of the symbolic

*. See page 65.

hair, which as clearly implies destruction by *the sword*.

Thus, by fire and sword will the Lord plead with the wicked Jews at the awful period before us; but, in the vision of the Apocalypse under consideration, the *former* agency is that alone specified, because it may be, of its extraordinary nature, and engrossing aspect of terror towards its devoted subjects.

Ver. 19, *For their power (literally, the power of the horses) is in their mouth, and in their tails: for their tails were like unto serpents, and had heads, and with them they do hurt.*] This is another feature of the monstrous character of this host. Unlike natural horses, their power is not in their hoof, but in their mouth and tails. The consuming breath of the former having been just mentioned, now it is added that they also inflict mischief with the latter, which are like serpents having heads. The word which is rendered “*injure*” is that which occurs in connexion with the *torment* of the locusts in the previous vision.* And we can imagine how the lashing about with head and tail of such ferocious hosts, would produce the effect here related.

Ver. 20. *And the rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues, yet repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship*

* Compare Chapter ix. 5., with verse 10.

devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood: which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk.] This is a sad recital of the hardness of heart which will characterize the wicked survivors amongst the Jewish people, notwithstanding the fierce anger of the Lord which will have fallen upon their associates. Like the Egyptians of old, under the plagues inflicted by Moses, they will yet persist in their mad rebellion against God. And this very obstinacy of spirit is perhaps hinted at in the book of Leviticus, where the case being put of Israel walking contrary unto God, and refusing to be reformed by Him, He threatens to “walk contrary unto them also in fury” and “to chastise them *seven times* for their sins.” Lev. xxvi. 28. This so far accords with the present scene in the Apocalypse, in that here we have the guilty Jews still impenitent, after their endurance of the six trumpet plagues which have now run their course; and, thus, the *seventh*, the consummating stroke of judgment, has to descend. The Prophet Jeremiah, also, (and pointing, it is submitted, to the same crisis) thus depicts their contumacy:—“No man repented him of his wickedness, saying, What have I done? every one turned to his course, as the horse rusheth into the battle.”* The context of this prophecy specifies, amongst

* Jer. viii. 6.

other features of the wickedness denounced, their idolatrous worship—thus further harmonizing with the period now under consideration.

That ~~idolatry~~ idolatry, and in its rankest form, will be one of the prevailing sins, which will attach to the Jews when they next return to their land, has been already remarked.* It may not be out of place here to observe, further, that of this, our Lord gave intimation, in the days of his flesh; when, on the occasion of the Jews referring one of his indubitable acts of exorcism to collusion with Satan, he spoke the parable of the unclean spirit leaving his house, for a season, and then returning and taking possession of it, with seven other spirits more wicked than himself, adding with weighty import—“*even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation.*”† As though he had said to them, ‘you have alleged that my expulsion of ‘the evil spirit, just effected, is not a *real* one; ‘but that, by concert with me, he has voluntarily ‘retired from his victim, presently to repossess ‘him. Now this is not the case;’ (and our Lord had abundantly refuted the calumny) ‘but I will ‘shew an instance of this very thing, to be yet ‘clearly manifested in yourselves, as a nation. ‘The ‘unclean spirit of idolatry which formerly possessed ‘you, prior to your captivity in Babylon, does not ‘seem now to dwell among you; and you pride

* Vol. 1. page 372.

+ Matt. xii. 22—45

‘yourselves upon this, and upon the comparative ‘sweeping and garnishing as it were, that your ‘national habits have assumed. But I announce ‘to you, that your deliverance from the evil one ‘shall be proved to have been only apparent, by ‘the event yet to succeed,—your becoming more ‘abandoned than ever in your former idolatry.’ Our Lord does not, indeed, thus name idolatry as the uncleanness he had in view; but there can be no doubt, as this was what the nation rioted in of old, that he specially points to it in the general description He employs. Moreover, the old Testament abounds in allusions to the same deplorable issue. “Their land also is full of idols: they worship the work of their own hands, that which their own fingers have made.” Isaiah ii. 8. And, that this relates to the future is evident from a subsequent verse; where, in connection with the Lord’s arising “*to shake terribly the earth,*” (just the language which is expressive of the judgments of the Apocalypse) it is said: “In that day a man shall cast his idols of silver, and his idols of gold, which they made each one for himself to worship, to the moles and to the bats.” v. 20. See also, Isaiah xlv. 15—20. lvii. 5.

Before passing from this verse, it may be well to call the reader’s attention to the fact, that in the text before us the worship of the various idols

of gold and silver, &c., is associated with the worship of Devils, or *Demons*. Indeed the latter is prefixed to the enumeration, as though its proper head, to which all that follows is reducible. And, this is in perfect correspondence with what we observe in the language of the Spirit elsewhere. Thus Paul, addressing the Athenians, denominates their idolatry as a *worshipping of Demons*. (See Acts xvii. 22. Grk.) And, writing to the Corinthians on the subject of the idolatrous worship going on around them, he speaks to the same effect:—"The things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to Devils (*Demons*) and not to God." 1 Cor. x. 20.

There is no authority whatever for interpreting Demons to mean the spirits of departed men, although this is so commonly done by Commentators, in order to accommodate what is branded as Demon worship in the Scriptures, to the invocation of saints in the Church of Rome. The term *Demon* frequently occurs in the gospels, and is used interchangeably with the expression *wicked or unclean spirit*, but never denotes human beings, either in the body or out of it. Compare Mat. x. 1, and Mark vi. 7, with Luke x. 17.

Ver. 21. *Neither repented they of their murders.*] Under the second seal, we saw it announced, amongst the circumstances of the day of the Lord,

when peace shall be taken from the earth (land), "*that they should kill one another.*" (Ch. vi. 4.) And the unnatural details of this period, we considered as referred to by our Lord, in the 24th of Matthew, in which he speaks of treachery and betrayal by relations and friends, in language obviously derived from the Prophet Micah.* And, now, turning to this prophet again, we find him beginning the very strain of utterance which our Lord quotes, with this emphatic note:—"The good man is perished out of the earth (land) and there is none upright among men: they *all lie in wait for blood.*" Micah vii. 2. Isaiah, also, in his first chapter, the comparison of which with Revelation xi., suggests that it relates, at least principally, to Jerusalem as it will be, when next occupied by the apostate nation, thus speaks:—"How is the faithful city become an harlot! it was full of judgment; righteousness lodged in it; but now *murderers.*" Isaiah i. 21. Again, "*your hands are full of blood.*" Ver. 15. (See also Isaiah xxvi. 21; xxxiii. 15; lix. 7.)

By the spirit of judgment and the spirit of burning, then, as rehearsed under this vision in the Apocalypse, will the Lord make inquisition for, and purge the blood of Jerusalem, from the midst thereof. But the wicked survivors, as they shall not have repented of their idolatry, so neither

* Vol. I., p. 327, 328.

shall they of their *murders*. Wrath, accordingly, will continue to be poured out upon them.

Nor of their sorceries.] Sorcery means divination by the agency of evil spirits. Such will be another characteristic of the future. By her *sorceries*, amongst other things, will the revived Babylon *deceive* all nations. (Rev. xviii. 23.) And, doubtless, it is in allusion to this that Paul speaks, in his Second Epistle to Timothy, touching the last times:—"But evil men and *seducers* shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived." 2 Tim. iii. 13. In this passage, the word rendered "*seducers*" properly means *sorcerers*. To test this assertion, by the Spirit's use of the term elsewhere, we are unable, as it occurs no where else in the New Testament; but it is supported by the usage of all classical writers, in conformity with the etymology of the word, which refers to the low moaning sounds like those of an ox, which were wont to be used in incantation scenes. Thus explained, the text in question at once leads the mind to the remonstrance addressed to the Jews by the Prophet Isaiah, (also referring, I submit, to the last days):—"And when they shall say unto you, seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards that *peep*, and that *mutter*: should not a people seek unto their God?" Isaiah viii. 19. See also Isaiah lvii. 3; xlvii. 9—12.

Thus, with the tenor of these various testimonies, concerning the future, from other parts of the sacred Word, the allusion to *sorcery*, in the vision before us, quite coincides. This abomination will yet abound in the Jewish land ; and, accordingly, while the Prophet Malachi threatens that the Lord, in the day of His coming, “ will be a swift witness against the *sorcerers* ;” * here, we see something of that witness in the exterminating judgment which will have fallen upon a proportion of the guilty parties ; only, we further learn that, as in the case of these other enormities, so, here, again, *impenitence* will characterize the survivors.

Nor of their fornications.] Thus, it is implied, “ filthiness of the flesh,” also, will be a feature of Jewish apostacy, in the latter day. To this the Epistles of Peter and of Jude abundantly testify. See 2 Peter ii. 10—18. Jude ver. 4—8. And as the sorceries just adverted to, so this awful licentiousness will be propagated from “BABYLON,” called, as she is, “THE MOTHER OF FORNICATIONS† AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.” Rev. xvii. 5. See also Ch. xiv. 8 ; xviii. 3 ; xix. 2 : and Vol. i. 391, 392. Hence, Jerusalem will prove comparable to Sodom of old, after whose name she is branded, by the Spirit, in a following chapter. Ch. xi. 8.

May not this suggest to the reader what the

* Mal. iii. 5.

+ See marginal translation.

“forbidding to marry” is, which the Spirit adduces as one characteristic of the apostacy of the latter times. (1 Tim. iv. 1—3.) Nor is this inconsistent (as has been hastily alleged by one of the popular expositors of the day) with our Lord’s allusion to the manners of the Jews, just prior to His second advent,—“*marrying and giving in marriage.*”^{*} For, this proverbial feature of *worldliness* may well co-exist with a career of *licentiousness*; just as our Lord’s comparison intimates that it did, in the days before the flood. As to Old Testament prophecies of the future, to the same effect, they are numerous. The reader may consult the following:—Ps. l. 18; Isa. lvii. 3; Jer. ix. 2; xxiii. 10; Hos. vii. 4; Mal. iii. 5.

Nor of their thefts.] This is another class of offences which will bring down Divine wrath upon the Jewish people in the coming crisis. The Prophets frequently refer to it as attaching to all classes of the Jews. Thus Isaiah:—“Thy princes are rebellious and *companions of thieves*, every one loveth gifts and followeth after rewards.” Isaiah i. 23. Again, in the Psalms, this reproach is addressed to them by God:—“*When thou sawest a thief, then thou consentedst with him.*” Ps. l. 18. And, in the Prophet Zechariah, we read of the Lord’s curse “entering into the house of the *thief.*”[†]

* Matt. xxiv. 38.

† Zech. v. 4.

There are numerous passages, also, in the Prophets generally, in which the use of “wicked balances and deceitful weights” is charged upon the Jewish people, pointing, it is submitted, to the future; whilst, in the Epistles of Peter and Jude, already adduced, *covetousness*, the root of theft, is especially marked in the enumeration of other vices which will yet be rampant upon the earth: James, also, in his epistle (addressed let us remember “*to the twelve tribes*”) speaks of *the hire of the labourers being kept back by fraud*, and of the cries of them which have reaped entering into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth. See 2 Peter ii. 14, 15; Jude 11; James v. 4.

Notwithstanding, then, the preceding woes which will have come upon the Jews, after they return to their land, for this and their other evil doings, even though one third of the wicked perpetrators shall have been destroyed by fire, the survivors are yet obdurate and impenitent. They are given over to delusion, to “believe a lie”* (as the Apostle speaks, and doubtless of this very time) and so they persist in their infatuated course.

And oh! what a picture this of the heart of man, fortified by sin and Satan, against God’s authority and holiness! Christian reader! Israel, in their past history, have taught us many lessons

* 2 Thess. ii. 11.

concerning the flesh—what it is, even under the most promising circumstances. But, let us not forget that their future history, opened up in the prophetic page, is necessary to complete our instruction. And, with this before us, how plain the truth of the incorrigibleness of our fallen nature by mere education or discipline. Surely, we should here gather what our dependance upon God is; and that it is only the mighty power of the Spirit that can direct and keep us in the right way. “*I will*” and “*ye shall*” is the law of God’s acting which alone will prove effectual for good with Israel. Let us learn that it is the same with ourselves,—that we may not have confidence in the flesh, but cleave to our God, sensible that power belongeth only unto Him; and that no matter what our knowledge or experience of the past, if His Almighty arm hold us not up, we shall, we must perish from the right way. Alas! how sadly the truth concerning the election and perseverance of God’s saints is misunderstood; when it is seen in any other light than this, as evincing *God’s everlasting love*, which once apprehending us will not let us go. Here, believer, is your security. And can your sense of it be abused, when it is recognized as the fruit of Divine love?

CHAPTER X.

Verses 1—11.

1 And I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud : and a rainbow *was* upon his head, and his face *was* as it were the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire.

2 And he had in his hand a little book open : and he set his right foot upon the sea, and *his* left *foot* on the earth.

3 And cried with a loud voice, as *when* a lion roareth : and when he had cried, seven thunders uttered their voices.

4 And when the seven thunders had uttered their voices, I was about to write : and I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Seal up those things which the seven thunders uttered, and write them not.

5 And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up his hand to heaven.

6 And swore by him that liveth for ever and ever, who created heaven, and the things that therein are, and the earth, and the things that therein are, and the sea, and the things which are therein, that there shall be time no longer.

7 But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets.

8 And the voice which I heard from heaven spake unto me again, and said, Go *and* take the little book which is open in the hand of the angel which standeth upon the sea and upon the earth.

9 And I went unto the angel, and said unto him, Give me the little book. And he said unto me, Take *it*, and eat it up ; and it shall make thy belly bitter, but it shall be in thy mouth sweet as honey.

10 And I took the little book out of the angel's hand, and ate it up ; and it was in my mouth sweet as honey : and as soon as I had eaten it, my belly was bitter.

11 And he said unto me, Thou must prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings.

We cannot have proceeded so far through this book of wondrous import without being deeply impressed with a sense of terror at the fearful things, it presents to our contemplation. Judgment after judgment has come forth upon the Jewish land, not to speak here of the earth at large ; yet, the God who sends these judgments, is the God of all grace ; and that land, and the nation to which it has been apportioned from of old, are regarded by Him with tenderness.* Nor is He unmindful of His promise to establish them, and the whole earth, through them, in ultimate blessedness. Hence, then, we cannot be unprepared for meeting with a pause in the midst of the rehearsal of these terrible things ; wherein, to strengthen the hearts of His suffering people, God intimates, by an imposing vision, that soon, now, the matter should be brought to its issue. Such seems to be the purport of the scene that now opens.

Ver. 1. *And I saw another mighty angel, come down from heaven.*] We have already had numerous angels, evidently created beings, presented to us, in the course of these visions ; and the sounding of the trumpet by the sixth angel has just occurred. Hence, there is no ground for the notion that the Lord Jesus himself is here denoted. To suppose this would be to put Him into the same category with the

* See Deut. xi. 12 ; Zech. i. 12—16.

creatures of his hand. Were it simply said *an* angel there might be some colour for such interpretation, though even then we should expect to find the definite article employed. But here the words are "*another* angel,"—at once suggesting that he belongs to the class of those heavenly agents previously mentioned.

Clothed with a cloud, and a rainbow was upon his head, and his face was as it were the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire.] These are certainly the insignia, as it were, of the Lord Jesus himself. At his ascension a cloud received him up out of the sight of His disciples. And, in regard to His second coming, it is said, that He shall come *with clouds*. Round about the throne, also, wherein He is represented as seated, in chapter iv. of this book, we read—"there was a *rainbow*." Again, at the scene of the transfiguration, it is recorded that "His face did shine *as the sun*;" while, in this very book, in the introductory vision, what is said of His feet,—"*that they were like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace*,"—seems quite equivalent to the remaining feature of the description of this angel,—"*his feet as pillars of fire*." All this is not disputed. But, still it does not establish the identity of this angel with Christ; especially, in the face of the anomaly noticed which this would involve. A *relative connexion* in the case we may indeed look for: and that

which quite suffices to account for the common features of description employed—is the connexion between the Lord Jesus—and this angel as His Ambassador. Because the latter appears in this capacity ; therefore, the insignia of his great king, are, as it were, worn by him.

Ver. 2. *And he had in his hand a little book open.*] The word is properly *opened*, the participle of the verb used in the fifth chapter to express the great problem concerning the sealed book—“ Who is worthy to *open* the book.” Its use here may indicate that it is the same book which is now exhibited in the Angel’s hand ; only it is no longer sealed but unrolled. Its being a *little* book, also, may be said to accord with this, as though the unrolling had diminished its compass. But, perhaps, the use of the diminutive term here was designed to suggest that now in the events of the Apocalypse remaining to be accomplished, some minor prophetic book, one of the Old Testament prophecies would be at length fulfilled. And certainly there is a striking resemblance in import between the visions of *Zechariah* and those which henceforth succeed in this book. Hence, by some writers, the former has been denominated “ a *little* Apocalypse.” (Compare Zech. iv. and Rev. xi. ; Zech. v. and Rev. xvii.) Still, whichever way we take it, this “ little book,” has a relation to the subsequent

chapters before us, and thus to the sealed volume mentioned in Ch. v.; and being now seen in the angel's hand, it would suggest to the intelligent beholder, that the process of the redemption of the inheritance, on the part of Israel's great Göel, would soon be completed. And, by such recognition we can easily understand, how the faith of the remnant will yet be sustained, at the affecting crisis which is contemplated. But, as we read on, we find they are not left to be thus encouraged by mere symbol:—

And he set his right foot upon the sea, and his left foot on the earth.] This action of the Ambassador-Angel, suited, like the *opened* book in his hand, to the announcement he makes, is that of one taking possession of the wide territory of the earth, or, of *the land*,—as it may be translated—Israel's land. For, of their Messiah, it is emphatically said:—"He shall have dominion, also, from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth." Ps. lxxii. 8. And, again:—"I will set his hand also in the sea, and his right hand in the rivers." Ps. lxxxix. 25.

Ver. 3. *And cried with a loud voice as when a lion roareth.*] The roaring of the lion, as indicating his search after his prey,* is known to spread terror among the beasts of the forest; and, so it seems proverbially used in Scripture as a

* Ps. civ. 21.

significant prelude to the breaking out of God's wrath upon His enemies ; especially, is it employed as a signal of the Divine interposition in the latter day. Thus, in connexion with the threatened chastisement of Israel, we read in the Prophet Amos : “ ‘The Lion hath roared, who will not fear ?’ ” *

But it is principally in reference to the vengeance which the Lord will, at last, take upon the oppressing *enemies* of Israel that we find this note of alarm alluded to in the Prophecies. For example, where the Lord speaks, in Hosea, of restoring Ephraim, the ten tribes, from the lands of their dispersion, and leading them up to the rescue of Jerusalem, when it will be in possession of the exulting Gentiles—a purpose not obscurely revealed in the Prophets†—it is added, “ ‘They shall walk after the Lord ; *He shall roar like a lion.*’ ” Hos. xi. 10.

Again, in the Prophet Jeremiah, we read :—
“ ‘For, lo, I begin to bring evil on the city which is called by my name, and should ye be utterly unpunished ? Ye shall not be unpunished : for I will call for a sword upon all the inhabitants of the earth, saith the Lord of hosts. Therefore prophecy thou against them all these words, and say unto them, *The Lord shall roar from on high,*’ ”

* Amos iii. 8. See also ver. 4 ; and ch. i. 2.

† Micah iv. 11—13 ; v. 8. Zech. ix. 9—15.

(the full metaphor of the *lion's* roar is not here introduced, but it is sufficiently implied,) “and utter his voice from his ^holy habitation; he shall mightily roar upon his habitation; he shall give a shout, as they that tread the grapes, against all the inhabitants of the earth. *A noise shall come even to the end of the earth; for the Lord hath a controversy with the nations; he will plead with all flesh*: he will give them that are wicked to the sword, saith the Lord. Thus saith the Lord of hosts, Behold, evil shall go forth from nation to nation, and a great whirlwind shall be raised up from the coasts of the earth. And the slain of the Lord shall be at that day from one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth: they shall not be lamented, neither gathered, nor buried: they shall be dung upon the ground.” Jer. xxv. 29—33. This language, besides illustrating generally the Scriptural purport of the *lion's* roar, relates, also, it is submitted, to the very period pointed at in the Angel's vision before us. For, like it, the context is occupied with the subject of Israel's approaching deliverance from judgment, and the Gentile nations coming under it; whereby, at length, the sovereignty of Messiah is established over the whole earth.

Ver. 3, 4. *And when he had cried, seven thunders uttered their voices. And when the seven thunders had uttered their voices, I was about to write: and*

I heard a voice from heaven, saying unto me, Seal up those things which the seven thunders uttered, and write them not.] These thunders, from having voices associated with them, and such, as the Apostle, it appears, could reduce to writing, should, perhaps, be regarded as articulate utterances, but loud as thunder. Just as it is recorded, in the Gospel by St. John, that the voice from heaven, whereby the Father acknowledged the cry of Jesus—"Father glorify thy name," thus fell upon the ears of the people—"The people, therefore, that stood by and heard it, said that it thundered." John xii. 28, 29. What these thunders imported we are not *here* informed, the Apostle being restrained from communicating it to us. But, as there were seven vial-angels, the commissioned ministers of wrath, awaiting the sounding, by their fellow, of the seventh trumpet, to which this vision is manifestly introductory; may we not, reasonably, suppose that these voices, as thunder, issued from *them*—anticipatory rehearsals of the Divine judgments with which the proclamation of the present angel was to be followed up; and which are afterwards furnished to us, as the vials are, successively, poured out. The charge to "seal up" the utterances of the thunder, by which restraint is put upon the Apostle's writing them, would seem to confirm this. At least, it seems to denote that they were

to be communicated eventually; for this is implied, in other places, where the same charge is given, in regard to prophetic disclosures. See Dan. xii. 4—9. It may be that the Lord would thus indicate to us that the *vial plagues*, to which these thunders are related, constitute that very vengeance upon the wicked Gentiles, which He had, of old, spoken of, even so far back as in the time of Moses, when he prefaced the recital with these remarkable words:—"Is not this laid up in store with me, and sealed up among my treasures?" Deut. xxxii. 34.

Ver. 5. *And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up his hand to heaven.*] Here the account of the angel just presented to us is resumed. It was the custom, in ancient times, to swear with an uplifted hand. Thus we read, in the Book of Genesis, of Abraham having lifted up his hand unto the Lord that he would not take anything of the recovered spoil of Sodom and Gomorrah. Gen. xiv. 22. And the Lord himself recites the same as His own action, in reference to His eventual interposition, in the latter day, in behalf of Israel, after He will have chastised them with severe judgments.* It may be profitable to trace this latter reference, and see how it comes in:†—"To me belongeth

* See also Ezekiel xx. 5, 15, 23.

† Deut. xxxii. 35, 36, 40—43.

vengeance and recompense ; their foot shall slide in due time ; for the day of their calamity is at hand, and the things that shall come upon them make haste. For the Lord shall judge His people, and repent Himself for His servants, when He seeth that their power is gone, and there is none shut up or left.” The reason here assigned for inflicting vengeance,—even the Lord’s *judging*, (that is, *delivering* His people Israel,) sufficiently shows upon whom such vengeance is intended to fall, namely, their Gentile oppressors. With this information, from the context, we are the better prepared for what follows in verse 40,—the solemn attestation in question: “ For I lift up my hand to heaven, and say, I live for ever. If I whet my glittering sword, and mine hand take hold on judgment ; I will render vengeance to mine enemies, and will reward them that hate me. I will make mine arrows drunk with blood, and my sword shall devour flesh ; and that with the blood of the slain and of the captives, from the beginning of revenges upon the enemy.” Here, we cannot doubt but that the parties threatened with vengeance are still the same, Israel’s oppressors, called here “ *the enemy*.” With this view only, is the following verse intelligible, which, contemplating the event, hereupon, summons the surviving Gentiles to rejoice with Israel :—“ Rejoice, O ye nations,

with his people: for He will avenge the blood of His servants, and will render vengeance to his adversaries, and will be merciful unto His land, and to His people.” ver. 43. Thus, we perceive, that not only is the description of the angel, in the vision before us, with uplifted hand, accordant with the Divine action spoken of in the Old Testament, but the crisis to which both relate seems also identical, as though the one scene were but the execution, at last, of the announcement made in the other.

Ver. 6. *And sware by him that liveth for ever and ever, who created heaven, and the things that therein are, and the sea, and the things which are therein.*] Such is the form of the oath pronounced by the angel; in which he appeals to God as the ever-living One, and the Creator of all things—a style of frequent use in the Scriptures to distinguish the true Jehovah, from the false gods of the heathen. Its introduction here is intended, doubtless, to have a peculiar bearing upon the character of the period contemplated, which, as we have already seen, will be marked by the grossest idolatry. See, also, ch. xiv. 6, 7.

That there should be time no longer.] That is, that there should be no more *delay*; but that at the appointed period, presently defined, the Divine purpose would surely be consummated. A succession of heavy judgments had already

come upon the Jewish people; and, now, the Antichristian host having invaded and become possessed of Jerusalem, a terrible career of tyranny was to run its course. But, hereupon, this mighty Envoy, wearing the insignia of the Lord himself, interposes, and declares that a limit is set to this tyranny, and that the great crisis of deliverance would not tarry beyond the appointed time.

In the Prophet Daniel we meet with a similar angelic announcement made in his hearing, as though to relieve his mind at the prospect of the great tribulation before his nation:—"Then, I, Daniel looked, and, behold, there stood other two, the one on this side of the bank of the river, and the other on that side of the bank of the river. And one said to the man clothed in linen, which was upon the waters of the river, How long shall it be to the end of these wonders? And I heard the man clothed in linen, which was upon the waters of the river, when he held up his right hand and his left hand unto heaven, and sware by Him that liveth for ever, that it shall be for a time, times and an half; and when he shall have accomplished to scatter the power of the holy people, all these things shall be finished."* Here, again, we have the uplifted hand and oath of an angel, as in the vision before us, and the accom-

* Daniel xii. 5—7.

panying proclamation is substantially the same, the only difference being, that the duration of Jewish oppression under Antichrist, three years and a half, is explicitly mentioned; whereas, in the Apocalyptic vision before us, the perspective of such duration is left by the Angel undefined, and he rather hastens to celebrate the event of Israel's redemption, by which it will be closed. Both visions meet at this point,—the accomplishment of the Divine anger against the Jewish people—the signal, as it will be, for retribution upon the Gentiles to begin. But the process of this, which was sealed up from Daniel, is communicated to John in the seven vial plagues which are initiated by the sounding of the seventh angel.

Ver. 7. *But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets.*] God's forbearance with the wicked, in general, who abuse that forbearance, is a mystery. More especially is it a mystery that the proud Gentiles should be allowed to prosper, whilst Israel, that nation whom God chose, of old, to Himself, as His peculiar people, lies in its present abject condition. To this purport the Apostle writes in his Epistle to the Romans:—"I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this

mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits ; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.” Rom. xi. 25. Thus, the condition of the Jewish people, even now, is a mystery. But mystery will attach still more to them, at the period which is here contemplated, when, after being smitten by direct judgments from the hand of God, they shall be undergoing the relentless tyranny of the Antichrist ; becoming a butt, as it were, against which, for the scorn of him and his myrmidons to be directed. This state of things, however, shall not last ; hence it is added by the angel,—“ the mystery of God should be finished in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound.” Then shall be introduced God’s own order of things, as He has oft witnessed to by the mouth of His Prophets, in which the first dominion shall be the portion of the daughter of Zion,* and the Gentiles be subordinated to the Jews, in happy allegiance to their glorious King. Thus, the ways of God will be vindicated in the setting in of *the times of refreshing and restitution of all things*, as Peter calls them, which God hath spoken of by all His holy Prophets since the world began.†

* Micah iv. 8.

† Acts iii. 21.

This vision, as a whole, remarkably corresponds with the tenor of the 50th Psalm, beginning, as it does, in like manner, with a Divine proclamation which challenges the attention of the whole earth:—"The mighty God, even the Lord, hath spoken, and called the earth from the rising of the sun unto the going down thereof." Up to this time, God will have been, as it were, letting the nations of the earth pursue their self-willed course with impunity. But, now, He breaks silence and speaks to the same purport with the Angel, in the Apocalypse, that there shall be delay no longer, in bringing to an end the grievous sufferings of the righteous Jewish remnant, the nucleus of the destined nation. Accordingly, it is added, as a joyous announcement for their hope to feed on:—"Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined." Such will be the happy consummation. Then follows the preliminary Advent, in the Person of Christ, to take vengeance upon their enemies:—"Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence: a fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him. He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that he may judge his people." This "judging," we cannot doubt, refers to His delivering them, *i. e.* the Jewish remnant, in which sense, it is said elsewhere, "God is the

judge of the widows.”* And now comes His acknowledgment and reception of the remnant, under the character by which they shall be so blessedly distinguished, amidst the general apostacy:—“Gather my saints together unto me ; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice.” The issue is, that “the heavens shall declare his righteousness ; for God is judge himself”—the rehearsal of which event may be said to be given in the outpouring, from heaven, of the seven vials, by which the Antichrist and his confederacy of Gentile nations shall, at length, suffer retribution. And it is worthy of remark, that, in reference to the vial plagues, language is used, in the Apocalypse, which brings to mind this very verse in the 50th Psalm:—“Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and wast, and shalt be, *because thou hast judged thus*. For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink ; for they are worthy. And I heard another out of the altar say, Even so, Lord God Almighty, *true and righteous are thy judgments*.” Rev. xvi. 5—7.

Ver. 8. *And the voice which I heard from heaven spake unto me again, and said, Go and take the little book which is open in the hand of the angel which standeth upon the sea and upon*

* Ps. lxxviii. 5.

the earth.] This voice had just been heard enjoining a suppression for the time of what the seven thunders had uttered. (see ver. 4.) Now it addresses the Apostle once more, directing him to take the book out of the angel's hand. Perhaps it was the voice of the Lord Jesus himself which, at the first, had sounded, like a trumpet, in the Apostle's ear, commissioning him to write to the seven churches, (Rev. i. 11,) and then again had called him up into heaven (ch. iv. 1) to see the rehearsal of events subsequent to their establishment. The direction in this present case is preliminary to the committal to the Apostle of another series of prophetic visions.

Ver. 9. *And I went unto the angel, and said unto him, Give me the little book. And he said unto me, Take it, and eat it up; and it shall make thy belly bitter, but it shall be in thy mouth sweet as honey.*] Obedient to the heavenly voice, the Apostle asks from the angel the book. Whereupon, it is given to him with the prescription that he should eat it up, and with a declaration of the effects that it would work in him. The contents, on digestion, would make his *belly* bitter; they would prove distressing to him, since they were details of grievous suffering. But they would be sweet in his *mouth*,—that is, enjoyable, in regard to first impressions, as

rehearsing the redemption of the earth from the incubus of woe hitherto resting upon it. The same process is enjoined on the Prophet Ezekiel, in regard to his commission to the house of Israel, and with the same result, although not so definitely expressed. In the second chapter, the Lord, after recounting the rebellious character of Israel, and warning the Prophet against being intimidated by them, thus proceeds:—"Open thy mouth, and eat that I give thee. And when I looked, behold, an hand was sent unto me; and, lo, a roll of a book was therein; and he spread it before me; and it was written within and without: and there was written therein lamentations, and mourning, and woe. Moreover, he said unto me, Son of man, eat that thou findest; eat this roll, and go speak unto the house of Israel. So I opened my mouth, and he caused me to eat that roll. And he said unto me, Son of man, cause thy belly to eat, and fill thy bowels with this roll that I give thee. Then did I eat it; and it was in my mouth as honey for sweetness." Ezek. ii. 8—10; iii. 1—3. Here, the *bitter* effect of eating this roll is not mentioned, as it is in the Apostle's case; but this may be because what is equivalent had been just declared by the Prophet, namely, that its contents were fraught with "lamentations, and mourning, and woe;" whereas, its sweetness in the mouth,

significant of its acceptableness to the Prophet, as a whole, when he contemplated the ultimate design of God toward Israel, is formally declared, because it had not been previously anticipated.

That such eating of their respective rolls of prophecy should be imposed on these servants of God, in connection with the discharge of their office, is, no doubt, full of significance, intimating, among other things, that in the matter of inspiration, God employs not only the human pen, but the human heart and feelings. For example, when Jeremiah exclaims, after pronouncing the Lord's exhortation to Israel to repent:—"But if ye will not hear it, my soul shall weep in secret places for your pride;"* the inspiration of which he was the subject, exercised his affections; God's own heart, being rendered out through these emotions of compassion and tenderness for the sinful people. And so when the Prophets speak with indignation against sin, God bathes their souls as it were in His own Spirit, so that they have fellowship with Him in the use of their moral faculties. Thus in Prophecy, and in the Scriptures generally, we have not only God's *words*, but His very *feelings* humanized, that we may be accessible to them. His procedure herein being but the natural budding forth and consequence of the

* Jer. xiii. 17; see also ix. 1; xiv. 17.

great mystery of the Incarnation. Of course, as in the case of Balaam, the Divine inspiration may lay hold on an agent disaffected to the thoughts and plans of God. But even here we see the affections are, for the time, constrained to reciprocate the Divine purpose.

But again: the Angel's requisition of John to eat the book has an application to all who are ministers of Christ. It teaches, that the truths to which they testify should first be received into their own hearts, and, penetrating their moral system, be incorporated, as it were, with their very being. Of the Lord Jesus, who is the truth, personally and essentially, every believer is to partake, eating His flesh and drinking His blood.* Except we do this, we have no life in us. The meaning of which is, that the life of Him, our risen Head, is to dwell within us, to be the staple and nourishment of our inner man. And, it is but in keeping with this, that the word of His truth, that which is the expression of His thoughts, should so thoroughly possess us, when we dispense it, as to be like the food which is assimilated to, and becomes part of ourselves. Thus, out of the abundance of the heart, should our mouths speak.

Ver. 10. *And I took the little book out of the angel's hand, and ate it up.*] Here, and in the

* See John vi. 53.

similar record about Ezekiel's roll, it may appear, at first sight, as though we had no alternative but to believe that the Apostle literally ate this book as enjoined. In which case, the act was a sensible sign to him of the deep and engrossing interest which he should take in executing the commission now entrusted to him, prophesying against the nations ; for, with them, henceforward, his testimony has, principally, to do. The trumpets had indicated judgment upon Israel ; but now the time has come for this series of visitations to close, and for the Lord to take the cup out of Israel's hand, and put it into the hand of their enemies.

But, perhaps, we are warranted in interpreting the *eating of the book*, after the manner of our Lord's own exposition of such expression in reference to the necessity of *eating His flesh*.* “How can this man,” it was said, “give us his flesh to eat?” “It is the Spirit,” answered our Lord, “that quickeneth ; the flesh profiteth nothing ; the words that I speak unto you they are spirit and they are life.” Thus, then, may we say of the enjoined eating of the little book—‘it is the Spirit that quickeneth ; the *book* profiteth nothing.’ In other words, it may be hereby signified that the Divine holiness, vindicated by the bitter chastisement on evil, to which John was now about to testify, would prove sweet or

* John vi. 52—63.

grateful to his palate, yea, and to all who should taste of the grace of God. The Apostle, thus receiving, *in spirit*, the truth that God chasteneth to profit, could rejoice, with trembling, in the assurance that when the Lord's judgments should come to pervade the earth, the inhabitants of the world would learn righteousness. Isaiah xxvi. 9.

Perhaps, this may be the place for repeating, with some detail of evidence, what has been barely noticed in a preceding page,* that this "little book," in the Apocalypse, is but a more extended rehearsal of the prophecies of Zechariah. The coincidence between the two series of visions is strikingly remarkable; and they cast light, mutually, upon each other. In the first place, let us look at the agreement of circumstances with which they commence. In the one case, the Apostle John receives the little book in connection with the announcement that the mystery of God is about to be finished; that is, as we have seen, that the sufferings of Israel are about to terminate, and that the long cherished purpose of God will be consummated without delay. In the other, the visions of Zechariah are thus introduced:—"Thus saith the Lord of hosts: I am jealous for Jerusalem and for Zion with a great jealousy. And I am very sore displeased with the heathen that are at ease," the Gentile

nations. Then, the reason for this displeasure is added : “ For I was but a little displeased, and they helped forward the affliction.” Here, we perceive, is the very mystery which is spoken of in the Revelation, as about to be brought to a close—the nations are contemplated as having the upper hand, while Israel is oppressed ; whereupon, God declares that he is jealous with a great jealousy.

Again, a vision follows, in the Apocalypse, significant of the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the Temple (ch. xi.) :—“ And there was given me a reed like unto a rod : and the angel stood, saying, Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein.” To this, a like scene succeeds, in Zechariah :—“ Therefore thus saith the Lord ; I am returned to Jerusalem with mercies : my house shall be built in it, saith the Lord of hosts, and a line shall be stretched forth upon Jerusalem. Cry yet, saying, Thus saith the Lord of hosts ; My cities through prosperity shall yet be spread abroad ; and the Lord shall yet comfort Zion, and shall yet choose Jerusalem.”* Again, “ I lifted up mine eyes again, and looked, and behold a man with a measuring line in his hand. Then said I, Whither goest thou ? And he said unto me, To measure Jerusalem, to see what is the breadth thereof, and what is

* Verses 16—17.

the length thereof. And, behold, the angel that talked with me went forth, and another angel went out to meet him, and said unto him, Run, speak to this young man, saying, Jerusalem shall be inhabited as towns without walls for the multitude of men and cattle therein ”*

Again, in the 4th chapter of Zechariah, we have another vision, the counterpart of which is before us in the Apocalypse :—“ And the angel that talked with me came again, and waked me, as a man that is wakened out of his sleep, and said unto me, What seest thou? And I said, I have looked, and behold a candlestick all of gold, with a bowl upon the top of it, and his seven lamps thereon, and seven pipes to the seven lamps, which are upon the top thereof: And two olive trees by it, one upon the right side of the bowl, and the other upon the left side thereof.” Thus, we observe, the olive trees fed the candlestick, that is, conveyed oil to its lamps, through the conducting pipes. “ So I answered and spake to the angel that talked with me, saying, What are these, my lord? Then the angel that talked with me answered and said unto me, Knowest thou not what these be? And I said, No, my lord. Then he answered and spake unto me, saying, This is the word of the Lord unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by my

* Verses 1—4.

spirit, saith the Lord of hosts.”* By this oracular utterance, pronounced over the whole apparatus of the candlestick and its appurtenances, it seems that God would teach Joshua and Zerubbabel (for they both had to do with Israel, one of them civilly, the other ecclesiastically) that whatever success attended their exertions in restoring the Jewish polity and worship, it was not to be attributed to any resources of theirs, but to the Divine Spirit, working by their instrumentality. And, in a following verse, their identification with this vision is put beyond doubt in the Angel’s answer to the Prophet’s definite enquiry: “What be these two olive branches which through the two golden pipes empty the golden oil out of themselves?” “These,” said the Angel, “are the two anointed ones, that stand by the Lord of the whole earth.” ver. 12, 14. Typically, at least, Joshua and Zerubbabel are here described. And now, turning to the 11th chapter of the Apocalypse, we have their antitypes presented to us as Christ’s witnesses, in the latter day, amongst the returned Jews, when the Divine dealings with that people shall reach their appointed crisis:—“I will give power” (says the Ambassador-Angel, representing Christ) “unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days,

* Verses 1—6.

clothed in sackcloth.” And who are these—the executors, as they are described, in a following verse, of portentous judgments like those wrought by Moses and Elijah? “*These*,” it is added, *are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks* standing before the God of the earth.”* That is, as Joshua and Zerubbabel acted, in their day, these servants of God will act, only far more imposingly, in the coming period of Jerusalem’s revival. Here, indeed, *two* candlesticks are spoken of; whereas, in Zechariah, only *one* is mentioned; but the assigning to each Witness a connection with the whole, single, candlestick, is, doubtless, all that is intended by the variation. Not to dwell on this, however, (a point which will meet us again as we proceed,) the analogy with which we are engaged between the prophecies of Zechariah, and what remains of the Apocalypse,—the little book consigned to John,—may be still further traced; and one capital topic is especially worthy of notice,—the common reference in both, to the revival of Babylon.

In the 5th chapter of Zechariah we have this remarkable vision on the subject:—“Then the angel that talked with me went forth, and said unto me, Lift up now thine eyes, and see what is this that goeth forth. And I said, What is it? And he said, This is an ephah that goeth forth.

He said moreover, This is their resemblance through all the earth. And, behold, there was lifted up a talent of lead : and this is a woman that sitteth in the midst of the ephah. And he said, This is wickedness.* Let us remember, as we pass on, that the latter chapters of the Apocalypse are full of the wickedness of Babylon, personified, also, as a woman. Here, then, we have her associated with the ephah measure, the emblem of commerce (this, too, having its counterpart in the Babylon of the Apocalypse). The vision proceeds :—“ And he cast it” (*i. e.* this emblem of *wickedness*) “ into the midst of the ephah ; and he cast the weight of lead upon the mouth thereof. Then lifted I up mine eyes, and looked, and, behold, there came out two women, and the wind was in their wings ; for they had wings like the wings of a stork ; and they lifted up the ephah between the earth and the heaven. Then said I to the angel that talked with me, Whither do these bear the ephah ? And he said unto me, To build it an house in *the land of Shinar* : and it shall be established, and set there upon her own base.”* Thus, in the land of Shinar, the very site of Babylon of old,† will wickedness have her seat ; and the Apocalypse takes up the subject, and, with awful emphasis, denominates the city :—“ MYSTERY, BABYLON

* Verses 5—11.

† See Gen. x. 10.

THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS, AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH." Rev. xvii. 5. The comparison need not be pursued beyond this. It must be obvious to the reader, that sufficient evidence has been produced for the assigned relation of the little book before us to the prophet Zechariah ; although, doubtless, other Old Testament prophecies (those, for example, in the beginning of Ezekiel, and the close of Daniel) may, on examination, yield similar features of comparison—the reason being that all prophecy, whatever be the occasion, more or less, points onwards to the redemption of Israel and the earth.

And it was in my mouth sweet as honey : and as soon as I had eaten it, my belly was bitter.] Thus the experience of the Apostle was in accordance with the Angel's announcement. Perhaps it may be observed, as a further improvement of this point, that when the children of God are of one mind with Him on any subject revealed in His Word, the revelation will be sweet to their *taste* or judgment, however bitter it may be to their hearts, as realizing the woes with which it may be pregnant. In like manner, the occupation of bearing testimony against others, according to the mind of God, while a painful one in many respects, may be yet accompanied with a spiritual enjoyment, arising out of

sympathy with God, and appreciation of His holiness.

Ver. 11. *And he said unto me, Thou must prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings.*] The Apostle's commission, as given at the beginning of this Book, specified only the seven Churches in Asia as concerned in these prophecies. (see ch. i. 11.) Now, it is communicated to him, that he must exercise his prophetic office in connection with another series of predictions which relate to a combination of Gentile powers—doubtless, that which will oppress the Jews in the latter day. *Against* such organized host, not merely “*before* them—and the original rather requires the former translation—the forthcoming testimony of the Apostle is to be directed.

An extraordinary interpretation of this verse is said to have obtained in the early Church, to the effect that John would again appear upon the earth, and renew his prophetic mission. And, by some it was believed, that to this end, his reservation from death was hinted at, by our blessed Lord, when to the enquiry of Peter, “Lord, and what shall this man do?”—he replied, “If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?” But the whole of this notion is a mistake. In the first place, the verse before us intimates, not any future occupation of John as a Prophet, but simply that he

was now to engage in the record of another series of prophetic visions, in continuation with those already rehearsed. And, secondly, though the saying went abroad after our Lord's reply to Peter, that John should not die ; yet it is carefully stated, by the Holy Ghost, that the Lord Jesus said not any such thing ; and the impression can only be regarded as an illustration of the corrupting effect of human tradition upon Divine truth. The design of our Lord's words, was obviously to rebuke Peter's undue inquisitiveness, and not to indicate any purpose concerning John.

CHAPTER XI.

Verses 1—19.

1 And there was given me a reed like unto a rod : and the angel stood, saying, Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein.

2 But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not ; for it is given unto the Gentiles : and the holy city shall they tread under foot *and* two months.

3 And I will give *power* unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred *and* threescore days, clothed in sackcloth.

4 These are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth.

5 And if any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies: and if any man will hurt them, he must in this manner be killed.

6 These have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy: and have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with all plagues, as often as they will.

7 And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them.

8 And their dead bodies *shall lie* in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified.

9 And they of the people and kindreds and tongues and nations shall see their dead bodies three days and an half, and shall not suffer their dead bodies to be put in graves.

10 And they that dwell upon the earth shall rejoice over them, and make merry, and shall send gifts one to another; because these two prophets tormented them that dwelt on the earth.

11 And after three days and an half the Spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet; and great fear fell upon them which saw them.

12 And they heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them, Come up hither. And they ascended up to heaven in a cloud; and their enemies beheld them.

13 And the same hour was there a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell, and in the earthquake were slain of men seven thousand: and the remnant were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven.

14 The second woe is past; *and*, behold, the third woe cometh quickly.

15 And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become *the kingdoms* of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.

16 And the four and twenty elders, which sat before God on their seats, fell upon their faces, and worshipped God.

17 Saying, We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned.

18 And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great; and shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth.

19 And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament: and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail.

The first thing presented to us in this chapter, is an emblematical action enjoined upon the Apostle, which introduces us to Jerusalem, and its temple, as the scene of consummation of Jewish woe. And with such a climax of suffering yet to be undergone, we may look back at the preceding proclamation of the Envoy-Angel, touching the eventual deliverance of the chosen people, as truly seasonable. Still, the final ordeal is to be passed through, and now its leading features are represented. The Antichristian hosts, strengthened as we have seen, by diabolical aid, have become masters of Jerusalem, after a protracted siege, and a fearful slaughter has ensued.* This is the juncture, probably, from which a considerable body of the inhabitants forewarned, according to our Lord's prophecy, by seeing the city

* See pages 65—68.

surrounded by armies, will have escaped to the mountains, or the wilderness, as it is here called.* Others of the devoted people will have been sent into captivity: and a mere remnant (the *third part*, it is submitted, mentioned in Zechariah) will be left to combat for their faith, and their allegiance to God, amidst the usurpers who, henceforth, for the prescribed period, profane the holy city. What their sufferings will be, may be easily conceived, and they are somewhat detailed in the 13th chapter. But, they shall not be left to contend against their enemies, without unequivocal tokens of the Divine faithfulness and power, in their preservation, at least, for a season, from all injury; and in the miraculous agency, at their head, of the two witnesses. The enemy having come in as a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall thus lift up a standard against them.†

Ver. 1. *And there was given me a reed like unto a rod.*] Such was the appropriate symbol of the office now about to be discharged by the Apostle, rehearsing the scene of the Temple's preservation and that of its worshippers, amidst the occupation of the holy city, by Gentile oppressors. Thus, we read in the prophet Ezekiel, of a man "with a line of flax in his hand, and a *measuring reed*"—the preliminary to

* See ch. xii.

† Isaiah lix. 19.

the following vision of the rebuilding of the Jewish temple and city. Ezekiel xl. 3, 5. In Zechariah, we read, also, to the same effect:—“ I looked, and behold a man with a *measuring line* in his hand. Then said I, Whither goest thou? and he said unto me, to measure Jerusalem, to see what is the breadth thereof, and what is the length thereof. And, behold, the angel that talked with me went forth, and another angel went out to meet him, and said unto him, run, speak to this young man, saying, Jerusalem shall be inhabited as towns without walls, for the multitude of men and cattle therein.” Zechariah ii. 1—4.

And the angel stood, saying, Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein.] In this commission of the angel, the term employed—*measure*, imports not the rebuilding of the temple, &c., but, rather, its preservation, under the terrible circumstances presently related. This we gather from the way in which the same term is used in the verse following, where the *not measuring* of the other locality, which is excluded, manifestly denotes its being left exposed to the violence of enemies. In this sense, also, the same form of speech occurs in the Old Testament, where David's triumph over the Moabites is recorded:—“ And he smote Moab, and measured them with

a line, casting them down to the ground: *even with two lines measured he to put to death, and with one full line to keep alive.*" 2 Sam. viii. 2. Here it is plain that the giving quarter to a proportion of the conquered people, is that which is indicated by the application to them of the measuring line.

As to the exact places, intended by "the temple of God and the altar," it is to be observed that, by the former expression, is usually denoted the sanctuary itself, to the exclusion of the sacred enclosures connected with it; and, therefore, the altar, or, altar court, (which is probably what is meant) being one of these enclosures, is additionally specified. The worshippers therein, it cannot be doubted, are Jews,—a faithful remnant of that body of the nation who may be expected, ere long, to return to their land. This remnant, it would appear, after the apostacy of their fellows, under the delusions of the Antichrist, will continue faithful to the worship of the true God; thus conforming, as they may be able, to the Divine admonition:—"Remember ye the law of Moses, my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments." Malachi iv. 4.

It is commonly said, indeed, that the law of Moses has been finally abrogated, and that the observance of its ordinances can never again be

acceptable to God. But, besides that, this notion is obviously incompatible with the plain import of such predictions as this under consideration, it really has no ground to rest upon, in the teaching of the word of God, elsewhere.

“The law and the prophets,” indeed, as our Lord says, “were until John.”* They involved the reception of John’s ministry; and that ushered the way, as Elijah’s ministry will more effectually do, in the latter days, into Messiah’s promised kingdom, as the consummation to which all have reference. And the purport of all is alike disregarded where submission to Messiah as “the end of the law for righteousness” is not found. Accordingly, when Messiah came and presented himself to the Jews, their fault, as led on by the Scribes and Pharisees, was, that whilst their obedience to the law was altogether defective, they yet rejected Him to whom it was framed to bear testimony.

Still, amidst all the nation’s blindness on this subject, the ordinances of the law, and the temple worship, were respected by our Lord. And, even after His crucifixion, when the vail of the temple was rent in twain (from which some have hastily concluded that all Jewish worship was henceforth disannulled) the Apostles, under the guidance of the promised Comforter, the Holy

* Luke xvi. 16.

Ghost, were wont to repair to the temple to engage in public worship. Thus, it is recorded that "Peter and John went up together into the temple at the hour of prayer." Acts iii. 1. And similarly, of the whole company of believers in Jerusalem, it is said, that "they continued daily with one accord in the temple." Acts ii. 46. And, when Paul went up to Jerusalem, he so far countenanced the temple worship as to associate himself with four Jewish converts, who had a vow, and offered with them the prescribed sacrifices. Acts xxi. 17—26.

All this—and other considerations might be adduced—is scarcely compatible with the view of the Mosaic law being abrogated. The observances of it, for the most part, have been, indeed, *interrupted*, we may say, *indirectly prohibited* ever since Jerusalem, the enjoined place of its solemnities, has become desolate. They were thus prohibited during the time of the captivity in Babylon. But if, as has been already submitted in this work, the present dispensation, as God's parenthesis in his dealings with the Jews, is (we know not how soon) to be taken out of the way, by the translation of the Church; what forbids it that the religious observances of that people, once more in possession of their land, should link on with those of a former generation, and be, in like manner, tolerated by God, until all things that

are written be fulfilled? This toleration may be, as perhaps was the case at the period already noticed, subsequent to the first advent, because of a little band of elect ones recognized by God as exercising spiritual discernment upon the ceremonial ritual. But whatever the reason, the fact is clear that there will be yet again, in Jerusalem, an acceptable observance of such ritual, and with the precedent of the past, it should not stumble the unprejudiced Christian.

The whole question of how far the obligation of the Mosaic law upon the Jew, still survives, may require, to some, further elucidation. But, as it is only collateral to the vision before us, it might be out of place to enlarge on it here. Still the remarks which have been made, brief as they are, may serve to disabuse the reader's mind, of the common mistake that Jewish worship, *as such*, is altogether effete, and can never again be sanctioned by God.

Perhaps it may be well to add, in reference to the popular interpretation of "the Temple," in this vision, as standing for the Christian Church, that in no place, in the New Testament, is the word used with the article, as here, in such figurative sense. Without the article, it is sometimes used both to denote the individual believer and the Church at large. But with the article, is ever defined the literal material building. And this is the method of discrimination observed by the

Spirit, when both ideas occur in the same sentence, as in the third chapter of the first of Corinthians. It is to be lamented, that our translation obscures this point. But the strict reading of the original is as follows:—"Know ye not that ye are *a* temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you." Then, reasoning from the case of the literal edifice.—"If any man defile *the* Temple of God, him shall God destroy; for *the* Temple of God is holy, *of which sort are ye.*" (οἱ τινές εστε υμῖς.)* 1 Cor. iii. 16, 17. Thus, also, it is at once determined that "the Temple of God," in which the man of sin is to sit, according to 2 Thess. ii. 4, is the *literal* Temple of Jerusalem; for the article is there employed.† And the same Temple, it is submitted, is alluded to, in this vision of the Apocalypse, as being to be preserved for a time, notwithstanding all opposition.

Ver. 2. *But the court which is without the temple, leave out and measure it not.*] The court here alluded to, would seem to be the outer and larger court, which compassed the whole sacred building, beyond which no uncircumcised Gentile or unsanctified Jew might lawfully proceed. And its being *left out*, in the measurement enjoined upon the Apostle, (*cast out*, as it is in the margin—exposed to violence and profanation) probably denotes, that from the immunity to be experienced

* See also 1 Cor. vi. 19.

† τὸν ναὸν τοῦ Θεοῦ.

by the faithful remnant of true worshippers, at whose head stand the two witnesses, all others should be excluded, and thus left subject to the cruelty of the Antichristian occupants of the city.

For it is given unto the Gentiles.] Here is the reason for the prohibited measurement just noticed. See Dan. vii. 25.

And the holy city.] That is JERUSALEM which is thus denominated throughout the Scriptures. See Neh. xi. 1, 18; Is. xlviii. 2; lii, 1; Dan. ix. 24; Matt. iv. 5; xxvii. 53.

Shall they tread under foot.] This is, doubtless, the treading which is alluded to in the 21st of Luke; where our Lord says: “Jerusalem shall be trodden down by the Gentiles, till the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.” Luke xxi. 24. This remarkable prophecy lighted, we may consider, upon what happened at Jerusalem, when it was besieged by the Romans, as a proximate, though imperfect, fulfilment; but it manifestly passes onwards beyond that event; and so its details easily adjust themselves to the future crisis, which is rehearsed in the Apocalypse. For example, Jerusalem being compassed with armies, some of the inhabitants fleeing to the mountains, others being put to the sword, and another portion of them being consigned to captivity—these features of our Lord’s Prophecy seem to have their full counter-

part only in the scene now before us, wherein Antichrist comes against Jerusalem, slaughters many of its inhabitants, and, as Jehovah's scourge, at length triumphs over all opposition until his own destiny arrives.

It is to be observed, however, that neither in this vision, nor in our Lord's prophecy, in the Gospel, does the word which is employed signify that Jerusalem is to be *trodden down* or *trodden under foot*, by the Antichristian hosts, in the sense of their *reducing it to a state* of ruin. It simply means that they shall *tread* it as having become its masters. The same word occurs in the Septuagint translation of Isaiah, i. 12. "Who hath required this at your hand, to *tread* my courts?" And the idea is obvious,—that of frequenting the courts of the temple for the ostensible purpose of worship.

Forty and two months.] Such will be the duration of Gentile domination in the Holy City, that is, three years and a half, denominated by our Lord, "the times of the Gentiles," (Luke xxi. 24,) the same it is submitted, which in the Prophet Daniel,* pointing to the same crisis, is thus recited in equivalent terms: "And he shall speak great words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High, and think to change times and laws: And they shall

* Dan. vii. 25.

be given into his hand until *a time and times and the dividing of time.*” That, *a time*, with Daniel, denotes *a year*,—certainly, not three hundred and sixty years, which popular commentators assume, is, at once, collected, beyond reasonable doubt, from the use of the term in the sentence upon Nebuchadnezzar, “let seven times pass over him.” Dan. iv. 16. For, Nebuchadnezzar lived to see the end of the period in question, and was restored to his kingdom. It may be, also, that this period is intended to answer to the half week or hebdomad of Daniel mentioned in his ninth chapter,* during which, the Antichrist having broken his covenant with the Jews, and thrown off the mask, will rage with open violence—the consummation of the Divine retort upon the apostate people, for their rejection, during the same time, of the true Messiah, the meek and lowly Jesus.†

And I will give power unto my two witnesses.] It is worthy of notice, that the word here rendered *witnesses*, although frequently occurring in the New Testament, is never employed to represent other than definite persons; so that we are at once spared the trouble of examining into the allegations that some writers have urged, as to these witnesses being collective bodies of men, or the two volumes of Scripture, the Old and New Testaments, or the two sacraments, &c.

* Verse xxvii.

† John v. 43.

The simple truth is, they are two eminent servants of God, Jewish saints, who, at this time of calamity to their brethren and their land, will be raised up to glorify God. Or, they shall have been executing their office before, only now they are specially endowed from above to meet this appalling crisis. In conjunction with the little company of faithful ones associated with them under their leadership, they will constitute a hallowed band, who, amidst unblushing blasphemy and infidelity, will confess Jehovah, the God of their Fathers; testifying, also, to the speedy interposition of Messiah, the King that will rule in righteousness.

Their number *two*, may be intended to harmonize with the Divine requirement: "At the mouth of two witnesses shall the matter be established." Deut. xix. 15. Nor is it to be overlooked, that such two-fold agency is that which has been employed by God on former occasions, in the history of Israel. For example, Moses and Aaron, in the Exodus from Egypt; Elijah and Elisha, in the idolatrous reign of Ahab; and Joshua and Zerubbabel, already referred to, after the return from the Babylonish captivity.

To suppose, as many do, that these witnesses are saints, who, having in former ages disappeared from the earth, either by death, like Moses and Elisha; or, by rapture to heaven, like Enoch

and Elijah,—now again resume their place of testimony, is quite an unnecessary embarrassment of the subject. Such illustrious servants of God, with the character of their respective miracles which they wrought, may well, indeed, be regarded as *typically* rehearsing the career of their successors yet to arise; but absolutely to identify the parties seems unwarranted. That *Elijah* will again appear, to discharge important functions amongst his people, organizing and preparing them for the glorious advent of their Lord, is not to be questioned; but his mission need not be confounded with that of the “two witnesses.” On the contrary, a distinctness seems to appertain to it. The circumstance, moreover, of his being a glorified saint, appears incompatible with the issue of *death* which yet the witnesses are to undergo.

As to the authority here assumed by the Speaker, in the vision, calling the witnesses, “*my* witnesses”—and saying, “*I* will give them power,” &c. albeit, in this interpretation, he has been referred only to the rank of creature-hood; the aspect of anomaly, it is submitted, ceases with the recollection that he yet acts as a special envoy of Christ; and it is but in keeping with this, that he should speak in the name of his Divine Lord

And they shall prophesy.] Here is defined the office which these servants of God shall perform. They will doubtless, be like their predecessors of

the *Old* Testament, warning and encouraging their brethren around them, as the case may require; and denouncing the judgments of Jehovah upon the ranks of the ungodly, and their arrogant leader. (See 1 Kings xviii. 31—38.) Thus, also, they will fulfil the definition of prophesying in the *New* Testament—speaking to edification and exhortation and comfort, 1 Cor. xiv. 3. This action of prophesying, be it also observed, is never once predicated in the Scriptures, except of *personal* agents.

A thousand two hundred and threescore days.] For so long, are they appointed to confront, by their testimony, the Antichristian hosts. The period is parallel to that of the just recited usurpation of the latter. Not that such usurpation actually closes with the witnesses' testimony; but that, hereupon, the Divine wrath reserved to descend upon the usurpers is no longer suspended, but let loose for the purpose of retribution. In fact, the successful onslaught of the Beast, the Antichrist, at the end of the period in question, becomes the signal for the outpouring, on him and his confederates, of the vial plagues. It is observable, however, that although the Antichrist's domination, and the witnesses' prophesying, are thus synchronous, the time is expressed in *months*, in the one case; in *days* in the other. Possibly, the variation, in the latter case, is designed to indicate that the occupation of the witnesses, in the

service of their Master, is daily and unintermitting; and that God takes cognizance of it accordingly.

Into the question, as to whether a day in Prophecy, does not mean a *year*, the Author is not disposed again to lead his readers. It has been already discussed, and negatived in the preceding volume of this work.* But it appears a plausible argument has been advanced from Luke xiii. 31—33, upon which it may be well to bestow a passing notice.

When our Lord was in Galilee,—the district over which Herod presided,—the Pharisees addressed to Him the intimidating taunt: “Get thee out, and depart hence, for Herod will kill thee.” To this, our Lord replied: “Go ye and tell that fox, Behold, I cast out devils, and I do cures to day and to morrow, and the third day I shall be perfected.” Here it is affirmed,† that our Lord alludes to the period of his ministry, denominating each year a day. But, pausing for reflection, we at once perceive a discordance to this position, in the fact, that our Lord’s ministry occupied not three years merely, but *three years and a half*. And, again, according to the admission of all Harmonists, these words were uttered by our Lord, not at the beginning of His ministry, but after more than two years had transpired; so

* See Vol. I., pp. 109, 110.

† Elements of Prophecy, by Rev. T. R. Birks. See also Fleming on the Apocalypse.

that if this were the subject contemplated, the reference to it would be, chiefly, in the *past* tense, whereas our Lord speaks only of the present, and the future—*to-day, to-morrow*, and the *day following*. Indeed, the truth seems to be, judging from the context, that our Lord spoke *literally*; and accordingly that on the third day he entered Jerusalem, the place of his passion, where he was presently “perfected.” For, continuing his reply to the Pharisees, He adds (verse 33,) “Nevertheless, I must walk (*i. e.* journey) to-day, and to-morrow, and the day following: for *it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem.*” To the appeal to His fear, “Get thee out” (*i. e.* from Galilee, the sphere of Herod’s jurisdiction) “for Herod will kill thee,” our Lord had bid defiance, saying how long his immunity from violence was to last. But if his reply had closed there, it might imply that *Galilee* would continue to be the scene of his ministry for three days longer; therefore the qualification follows, that notwithstanding, he was and would be for the interval in question, quite safe from the machinations of Herod, yet for another reason he would have to pursue his journey onwards to Jerusalem. And what confirms this interpretation is, that the passage is immediately succeeded in the record of the Evangelist; by the lamentation of our Lord over Jerusalem; which, according to Matthew,

was uttered in the temple, after the Lord had entered the city. (Compare Luke xiii. 34, 35, with Matt. xxiii. 37—39.)

But, on the other hand, let it be supposed, for a moment, according to the theory in question, that years are denoted by days in this passage; and how perplexing it renders other parts of the sacred narrative! For example, when our Lord spoke of His being to be crucified and to rise again the third day, He ought to have been apprehended as referring to *three years* as the period of his sepulture! Such is the confusion which this notion would introduce into our apprehension of the plainest matters.

Clothed in sackcloth.] It was a Jewish custom, on the occasion of any calamity, private or public, to wear sackcloth as the mourning habit. Thus we read, of Ahab, when the Divine judgment was pronounced against him, in the matter of Naboth, That “he rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his flesh, . . . and lay in sackcloth.” 1 Kings xxi. 27.

When Mordecai, also, was apprized of the ruin that threatened his nation, “he put on sackcloth.” Esther iv. 1. See, also, Job xvi. 15; 2 Kings xix. 1, 2; 1 Chr. xxi. 16. Even Gentiles, after this manner, indicated their grief. See Jonah iii. 5, 6. But the Prophets, especially, were wont to assume this clothing, because of the

heavy burdens they had to pronounce upon the sins of their people. (see Is. xx. 2.) Here, accordingly, in the case of the two witnesses, mourning apparel is adopted by them, corresponding with the distressing circumstances now affecting their nation, and the judgments they are commissioned to inflict. It may be, because of this, that the same apparel will be adopted by False Prophets, who, we have reason to believe, will abound, at this time, in Jerusalem. For, in Zechariah, we read amongst other features of the happy future, that such parties shall not wear “a rough garment* to deceive.” Zec. xiii. 4.

These are the two olive trees and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth.] This identification of the two witnesses, with the vision in the Prophet Zechariah, is doubtless because of their being the Antitypes of Joshua, and Zerubbabel, who are therein represented, it would seem, under this very emblem of two olive trees, as ministering Divine grace to the returned Jewish remnant, symbolized by the candlestick. Their successors in the coming day of the Lord (the two witnesses) will have similar functions committed to them, touching their persecuted brethren. In one particular feature, indeed, as already observed,† there seems to be a failure of

* “Garment of hair” is the marginal reading.

† See page 114.

coincidence between the visions, the correlative symbol of the two olive trees, being in the one case, simply *a candlestick*, in the other *two candlesticks*. But this variation admits of easy solution. In Zechariah, let us remember, the position of the two olive trees is carefully marked, as being at either side of the candlestick, *one at the right hand, the other at the left*; the import being, that God's servants in question, had both of them to do with the communication of succour to the distressed remnant, to qualify them for the work of testimony.

Here in the Apocalypse, however, the symbol of the candlestick had not been mentioned; but that which it imported is introduced directly and at once, namely, the company of worshippers preserved by God amidst their enemies; and the witnesses are associated with them. Nor is it till the latter come to have the relationship assigned to them, of the two olive trees in Zechariah's vision, that any candlestick is referred to. And now, when this is at length being done, instead of saying with the Prophet, that their position was at either side of the candlestick, the Spirit conveys the same truth of their combined connection with the suffering remnant, by assigning a candlestick to each.

Ver. 5. *And if any man will hurt them.*] The word "will" is not here the sign of a tense,

belonging to “hurt,” but a separate verb. The meaning is, if any man *wills* to hurt them. Just as in our Lord’s words, Matt. xvi. 24: “If any man will come after me,” the strict rendering is *wills* to come after me.

Fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies.] That is, *at their word* the judgment comes. Thus Elijah by his prayer, brought down fire from heaven, to consume those who were sent to seize upon him—the captains and their fifties. (2 Kings i. 10—12. See also Jer. v. 14. Num. xvi. 35.)

We are not of course, to suppose, that fire actually issues from the mouths of the witnesses; nor does literality of interpretation require this, any more than when we read of the Lord Jesus having a sword proceeding out of his mouth,* we are required to believe in the projection of a material sword, from his sacred Person. The fact is, the same simple interpretation holds here; by the word of his mouth, He will cause his enemies to be slain; just as we read in Isaiah: “with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked.” Isa. xi. 4. He will give its commission to the material sword, and the work of vengeance shall be done. Such is the truth obviously intended.

And if any man will hurt them.] The means of avenging themselves which the witnesses

* Rev. xix. 21.

possess, having been rehearsed, the supposition of an assailant is again emphatically put—a repetition of the former clause.

He must in this manner be killed.] Thus any attempt to injure the witnesses is ordained to prove fatal to the aggressor. And, no doubt, by the Antichristian host, now masters of Jerusalem, many onsets will have been made against them, whereby such penalty shall be incurred; until at length, consulting for their own safety we can conceive their adversaries to desist for a time from a renewal of their attacks.

Ver. 6. *These have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy.*] Such is the further Divine sanction of the witnesses' mission. During the period of their ministry, that is the fore-named twelve hundred and sixty days, they will have power (which it is implied also they will exercise) to inflict the visitation of drought. And it is worthy of notice, that the same sort of visitation, and for the same duration, is on record, as having been inflicted upon Israel by the Prophet Elijah. (1 Kings xvii. 1.) Our Lord also alludes to it in the New Testament;* and we have another reference to it in the Epistle of James. We read there:—"Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain; and it rained not on the

* Luke iv. 25.

earth by the space of three years and six months.”
Jas. v. 17.

With this precedent, how strange for Expositors to maintain that not a literal, but “*a spiritual drought must be intended!*”*

And have power over waters to turn them to blood and to smite the earth with all plagues as often as they will.] Here we are reminded of the actings of other types of these witnesses, even Moses, and Aaron, who wrought judgments after this manner in Egypt. See Ex. vii. 20. Ps. cv. 29.

By “the earth,” in this verse,—*the land* i. e. of Palestine may be signified, the word in the original is equivocal.

Ver. 7. *And when they shall have finished their testimony.*] It is literally, when they shall be about to finish their testimony; that is, just as the twelve hundred and sixty days allotted to them for their testimony, are coming to a close.

The beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit.] This is evidently, THE ANTICHRIST whose career is given under this very description in a subsequent chapter, which need not be anticipated here. Suffice it to say, for the present, he ascends from the *pit of the abyss*, which, as we have seen, is not only the place of incarcerated fiends, but is in some way connected with Hades.† At the

* Horæ Apocalypticæ.

† See page 54.

time contemplated in this vision, he seems to be at the head of the congregated nations, and of those mysterious hosts recited in the ninth chapter, which have come up against Jerusalem.

Shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and shall kill them.] No doubt, he will have been intent upon their destruction all along. But until the work of these servants of God shall be done, they will prove immortal.

Ver. 8. *And their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified.*] This public exposure of the corpses of the witnesses, will attest the hatred of which they will have been the objects. It is a measure of impotent malice, which has often been resorted to by those who are relentless towards their victims. There is little doubt that the 79th Psalm points, in its lamentation, to this very spectacle, “O God, the heathen are come into thine inheritance; thy holy temple have they defiled; they have laid Jerusalem on heaps. The dead bodies of thy servants have they given to be meat unto the fowls of the heaven, the flesh of thy saints unto the beasts of the earth. Their blood have they shed like water round about Jerusalem; and there was none to bury them.” Ps. lxxix. 1—3.

The city where this exposure is to take place, is manifestly that of Jerusalem. That it is not here

called the *holy* city, may be, because of the last remaining testimony to God in it, being now destroyed, and blasphemy triumphing without control. But though the term, which is used instead, "*great*" is otherwise applied in this book, for instance to Babylon, yet its application to Jerusalem is not without precedent, as may be seen from the book of Nehemiah, in which the appointment of the different watches over Jerusalem, is followed by this clause: "Now, the city was large and *great*," Neh. vii. 4. And such description, be it observed, is attached to the city, not in its pristinè integrity, but after its imperfect restoration upon the return of Judah from their captivity in Babylon.

But, we are not left even to this conjecture, with the decisive indications of its truth furnished by the whole context. A clause is annexed, whereby the identification contended for is put beyond doubt—" *which is spiritually called Sodom and Egypt.*" Here is allusion to the Spirit's, denomination of Jerusalem, by the Prophets of the Old Testament; and in Isaiah and Ezekiel, we see Sodom and Egypt, the one by name, the other by character, both cited as exemplars of the degenerate place where God had once put his name. (See Isaiah i. 1, 9, 10; Ezek. xvi.

But further we read: " *where also our Lord was crucified.*" What other place than Jerusalem

can this mean? One is really lost in amazement at the fact, that good men, who have written on this subject, can controvert a position so emphatically affirmed by the Spirit of God! Perhaps no example could be adduced to illustrate more forcibly the blinding influence of pre-conceived system on the human mind.

But the place of exposure in question is still further defined as being in *the street* of the great city. This denotes, doubtless, that part of the city where there will be most resort. And it would appear that in ancient towns, at least among the Jews, such locality was generally found near the gate. Thus we read in the book of Proverbs of “the chief place of concourse in the opening of the gates.” Prov. i. 21. And such was the area, probably, where, on the invasion of Sennacherib, King Hezekiah reviewed, as it were, his defensive forces, according to the account in the book of Chronicles: “And he set captains of war over the people, and gathered them together to him *in the street of the gate of the city.*” 2 Chron. xxxii. 6. See also Jer. v. where *the broad places* of Jerusalem are expressed in the Septuagint, by the same greek word (πλατεια) which is here used for street.

Ver. 9. *And they of the people and kindreds and tongues and nations.*] These are the assembled bands under the Antichrist, who had invaded and

become masters of the city. As obsequious subjects they now crowd to behold the trophies of their great Leader's victory.

Shall see their dead bodies three days and an half, and shall not suffer their dead bodies to be put in graves.] How easy to conceive literally the scene thus depicted to us, when we call to mind that after this very manner is recorded, the judgment that befel the disobedient Prophet of old: "Behold men passed by and *saw the carcase* (of the Prophet) *cast in the way.*" 1 Kings xiii. Thus the incidental facts of Scripture history help us to interpret these visions of the future, and urge on us to discard the ingenious and fanciful explanations of allegorical writers.

But this *seeing* of the dead bodies of the witnesses imports more than mere observation on the part of their enemies. It seems to imply further, that the latter will feast their eyes upon the sight, taking complacency in it. And for three days and an half will they enjoy the barbarous exhibition, filing past it, as we can conceive, in their appointed ranks; during which period every approach to perform the last sad offices of humanity will be watched and sternly repulsed. So that, like dung upon the face of the earth, will the bodies of these servants of God be doomed to lie. But the triumphing of the wicked shall be short, as the next verse proceeds to relate.

Ver. 19. *And they that dwell upon the earth.*] That is, the occupants of the land, as it may be translated, (Palestine), though it may be that as the intelligence spreads, the inhabitants of the earth, at large, will join in the same demonstration.

Shall rejoice over them, and make merry, and shall send gifts one to another.] Thus, the martyrdom of the witnesses, will be the occasion of universal festivity amongst their enemies; just as we read, the humiliation of Samson, blinded and enslaved in the hands of the Philistines, was the signal for the indulgence of their unhallowed mirth:—"Then the lords of the Philistines gathered them together for to offer a great sacrifice unto Dagon their god, and to rejoice: for they said, our god hath delivered Samson our enemy into our hand. And when the people saw him, they praised their god: for they said, our god hath delivered into our hands our enemy, and the destroyer of our country, which slew many of us." Judges xvi. 23, 24.

After this manner, we can conceive, will the great Antichristian confederacy exult over the fall of the witnesses; and regarding it as the exploit of their now irresistible leader, no doubt they will render him their idolatrous homage. The mode whereby they will manifest their exuberant joy, sending gifts one to another, corresponds with the usage of former times as

recorded in Scripture. Thus, it is said of the Jews in the reign of Ahasuerus that when they escaped from the murderous plot of Haman, they made the day appointed for their destruction “a day of gladness and feasting: and of sending portions one to another.” Esther ix. 19. See also Neh. viii. 10, 12. And, even now, it is reported by travellers that this interchange of presents on occasions of joy, prevails in the East.

Because these two prophets tormented them that dwelt on the earth.] Here is the reason for the foregoing revelry, on the death of the witnesses, which will prevail amongst mankind; at least, among the inhabitants of Palestine,—the region specially concerned. They will have been tormented by the strokes of judgment inflicted on them, from time to time, by these servants of God. In this way, Elijah of old, their type, was obnoxious to Ahab, and was denominated, by him, “*the troubler of Israel.*” And thus it is that wherever there is a faithful, seasonable, testimony lifted up by the Church of God now, against the sin of the world, the world is thereby provoked, and its resentment exhibited. As an old writer expresses it, the truth is “*like salt unto the sores of the wicked, which biteth and vexeth them.*” Or, according to Scripture language they love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil;* and so

* John iii. 19.

they who shed light upon them are counted and treated as their enemies. Thus, it was with the Lord Jesus, in His own experience; and so it must be in measure with every faithful disciple.

Alas! that for the poor world's sake, to rouse it from its insensibility, there should be so little of this pungent testimony at the present day. Surely, it is because of its absence, that forbearance is shewn to religion by the ranks of worldly men around us. The old cast off skins of the serpent are, perhaps, pierced from time to time with much precision; but his present evil agency, whereby he is now, as it were, lubricating society ere he makes it his prey, is comparatively untouched. There are few witnesses to God whom the world needs to entreat, as Israel's wicked king did the faithful Micaiah,—“Let thy word, I pray thee, be like the word of one of them, and speak that which is good;”* for, “smooth things” are abundantly spoken, and the world is well pleased to have it so, and to retain the church as a useful ally for its own purposes.

Ver. 11. *And after three days and an half the Spirit of life from God, entered into them.*] With the fact, in contemplation, of our blessed Lord's resurrection, after nearly the same interval, how natural to interpret this language as indicating the same *literal* resurrection of the witnesses. As

* 1 Kings xxii. 13.

living men they had been animated by “the spirit of life.”* When put to death, that spirit had “returned to God who gave it.”† And, now, from God, it “enters into them again.” What more circumstantial detail of the process of reanimation could be given? But the description is more minute still:—

And they stood upon their feet.] This again corresponds with the recital in the Old Testament of a literal return to life. For it is thus recorded concerning the corpse that was being deposited in the sepulchre of Elisha, that, “when the man was let down, and touched the bones of Elisha,” he not only “revived,” but “*stood up on his feet.*” 2 Kings xiii. 20, 21.

And, now, let us pause and see if—of this remarkable event, analogous to our Lord’s own resurrection—we have not a prophetic notice in the prophet Isaiah, chap. xxvi. At the 17th verse we have the Jewish remnant lamenting their utter disappointment in regard to the realization of the promised hope of their nation:—
“Like as a woman with child, that draweth near the time of her delivery, is in pain, and crieth out in her pangs; so have we been in thy sight, O Lord. We have been with child, we have been in pain, we have as it were brought forth wind; we

* Gen. vii. 22.

† Just as it is said of Jairus’ daughter, “her spirit came again.” Luke viii. 55.

have not wrought any deliverance in the earth ; neither have the inhabitants of the world fallen.” This last clause, according to Bishop Horsley, would be better rendered “ *The land is not made (a place of) security, nor are the inhabitants of the world about to fall.*” Such we can easily imagine to be the thoughts of the faithful ones in Jerusalem, domineered over by the Gentiles ; especially, as they contemplate the death and ignominious treatment of the two Witnesses, who will have been at their head. But how does the Lord reply to this complaint ? Just in accordance with His design, as we see it detailed in the issue before us :—“ Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise ;” language which quite fits the event of the resurrection of the witnesses, after the manner of our Lord’s own resurrection. But allowing, as is maintained, that all the ancient versions have the term body plural, that is, *bodies*, and that the ellipsis supplied by our translators is uncalled for ; even then, the allusion to the witnesses is no less striking, for the mode of expression—“ *My dead bodies shall arise*”—clearly harmonizes with the emphatic title “ *my two witnesses.*”

With this interpretation of the Prophet, it need only be added, the context is not at variance, but rather otherwise, which may the more commend to the reader the connection between the passages.

And great fear fell upon them which saw them.]
How natural this effect upon the beholders of

such a supernatural event! Thus, at our Lord's resurrection, fear prevailed amongst all parties. The keepers shaking and becoming as dead men; and even His affectionate female disciples were stricken with this emotion. Nor was it only the apparition of the attendant angel which produced it. The event itself must have inspired awe, as pressing upon the mind a sense of the Divine power and presence; just as is mentioned in the case of Peter, when he beheld the miraculous draught of fishes; and, similarly, on the occasion of the Divine visitation on Ananias and Sapphira, when we read:—"And great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things." Acts v. 11.

Ver. 12. *And they heard a great voice from heaven.*] That is, the Witnesses are thus greeted. This address to them being analogous to that with which our Lord was answered on the contemplation of His passion, and the prayer which it inspired. See John xii. 28.

Saying unto them, Come up hither.] Such is the articulate utterance which the voice conveys to them. And, doubtless, it proceeds from the Lord Jesus, now in the aerial regions with his risen and translated saints of this dispensation. The earth will have cast out these His servants, denying to them even the decency of burial; but thus the heavens will open to receive them, and they shall be welcomed into the presence of their Lord.

And they ascended up to heaven in a cloud, and their enemies beheld them.] Thus their glorious triumph over their enemies is consummated. It will be as when Elijah of old was translated to heaven in a chariot of fire, (2 Kings ii. 11); or, as the Lord Jesus himself was received up into glory from the midst of His admiring disciples. Indeed, the language in both descriptions is remarkably parallel, as though to make the literality of the one event assure us of that of the other. Compare Acts i. 9, 10.

But, what shall be said of the system of interpretation by which all these palpable facts concerning the two Witnesses; their death; the exposure of their dead bodies; their resurrection and ascension; are all explained away: and in their stead is substituted, as the purport of this vision, a recital of what the Paulicians, the Waldenses, Albigenses, &c., underwent from the Papacy, at last terminating in the suppression of their testimony; then, the revival of that testimony several years afterwards in the person of Luther; and lastly, the investment of Protestantism with political influence in the world! Surely, by this and such like exercise of man's ingenuity, the word of God is made of none effect. Nor is this all the mischief that is done; but further, a positive countenance is hereby given to the infidel tendency of the day, which is directed to the resolving into

mere myth, and allegory, the miraculous facts of Christianity. For example, according to the most recent exposition of this figurative school of interpretation,* the heavens into which the Witnesses ascended must be the political heavens to which the truth of the reformation came to be exalted, because it was *visible to their enemies*. From this it is argued, that “*it is not the spiritual heaven of the Divine presence*” which is contemplated. Surely, this is presenting material,—however unwittingly,—to German Neologians, where-from to reduce the great cardinal truth of our Lord’s ascension into a mere figurative intimation of the ascendancy that awaited the inculcation of His pure system of morals; for, according to the Scriptures, *Jesus was seen* by His disciples to go into heaven; as truly as the Witnesses were seen to do so by their enemies.† Compare Acts i. 11.

Ver. 13. *And the same hour was there a great earthquake.*] This is analogous to what occurred at the resurrection of our blessed Lord himself; and likewise in Philippi, when Paul and Silas had their prison doors opened to the terror of their persecutors. Mat. xxviii. 2; Acts xvi. 26. In both these passages—obviously relating to different phenomena—the reader will observe the expression is, a “*great earthquake*,” and therefore, we are not to conclude, as has been hastily done, that the

* Horæ Apocalypticæ.

† See Apocalyptic Interpretation.

employment of such expression in this book necessarily argues an identity of allusion : for instance, between the earthquake here mentioned and that under the sixth seal, Chap. vi. 12. Indeed, to those who have followed the Author in his introductory remarks on the interpretation of the seals,* this mistake has been already provided against ; for therein it has been submitted, that the sixth seal relates to that phase of events, generally, which will present itself just prior to the appearing of the Lord *in the clouds of heaven* ; whereas, here, in the sixth trumpet, though belonging to a parallel line of visions, it is plain that such crisis is not yet reached ; the vial plagues being still in reserve. That the earthquakes under the sixth *vial* and the sixth seal are the same, is probable enough, their relative positions in the two parallel lines of visions seem to indicate as much. But this earthquake, under the sixth trumpet, cannot be identified with either.

In the Old Testament prophecies, however, it is not difficult to recognise the counterpart of this precise phenomenon. For example, in Isaiah we read, “Woe to Ariel, to Ariel, the city where David dwelt ! add ye year to year ; let them kill sacrifices. Yet I will distress Ariel, and there shall be heaviness and sorrow : and it shall be unto me as Ariel. And I will camp against thee round

* See Vol. i. page 307—314.

about, and will lay siege against thee with a mount, and I will raise forts against thee." Isaiah xxix. 1—3. This answers to the siege of Jerusalem, implied, as we have seen, under the fifth trumpet. The name, Ariel, seems to point to the ancient denomination of the city when David took it from the Jebusites, and may be here used by God to signify how unclean in His sight are its now apostate inhabitants. Then follows the recital of the complete subjection of these same guilty parties: "And thou shalt be brought down, and shalt speak out of the ground, and thy speech shall be low out of the dust, and thy voice shall be, as of one that hath a familiar spirit, out of the ground, and thy speech shall whisper out of the dust. Moreover the multitude of thy strangers shall be like small dust, and the multitude of the terrible ones shall be as chaff that passeth away." Ver. 4, 5. This accords with the treading of the holy city by the Gentiles. Hereupon the Prophet proceeds: "Yea, it shall be at an instant suddenly. Thou shalt be visited of the Lord of hosts with thunder, and with earthquake." Ver. 6. May we not here recognize the earthquake before us, under the sixth trumpet, whereby the Divine retribution comes upon the apostate city, in the midst of its wicked carnival over the slain witnesses. Doubtless, moreover, this begins the period of terrible commotion and ruin yet to characterize the Jewish

land, which is depicted in the 24th chap. of Isaiah, and summed up in these emphatic words: "The earth (land) is utterly broken down, the earth (land) is clean dissolved, the earth (land) is moved exceedingly. The earth (land) shall reel to and fro like a drunkard, and shall be removed like a cottage; and the transgression thereof shall be heavy upon it; and it shall fall, and not rise again." Ver. 19, 20. In the Hebrew, the word rendered earth equally stands for land, as above given. And it is plain, from the tenor of the chapter, that the latter is what is meant. Nor need the last clause of the description, about its *not rising again*, embarrass us in this conclusion; for the force of the words, according to the Hebrew idiom, is simply, that the land shall not merely stumble, as it were, recovering itself like a drunken man, but shall become utterly prostrated for the appointed time.

And the tenth part of the city fell.] The city referred to is of course the same already defined, that is, Jerusalem. And one effect of the earthquake is, that the tenth part of the city falls. Here, again, the 24th of Isaiah may be adduced to help our conception of the scene thus rehearsed. "The city of confusion," saith the prophet, "is broken down; every house is shut up" (i. e. obstructed as we can imagine by the ruins) "that no man may come in.." v. 10. Again, "In the city is left desolation, and the gate is smitten with

destruction,” v. 12. In Ezekiel, also—as God contemplates with anger the confederacy which is depicted, in this vision, as insolently triumphing in Jerusalem,—He thus declares what shall happen:—“Surely in that day there shall be a great shaking in the land of Israel; . . . and the mountains shall be thrown down, and the steep places shall fall, and every wall shall fall to the ground.” Ezekiel xxxviii. 19, 20.

But this dreadful crash of buildings and houses in Jerusalem will not affect merely the Gentile invaders. No doubt, upon the unhumbled Jews themselves, the disaster is also designed to operate. For they will have “built their city with blood, and established it by iniquity;” and, so, in its burying them in its ruins, they shall suffer the righteous retort predicted:—“the stone shall cry out of the wall, and the beam out of the timber shall answer it.” Hab. ii. 11. Thus, may not the allusion, in the prophet Ezekiel, to the catastrophe attending “the wall daubed with untempered mortar”* be more than a mere similitude? May it not point to this very event, the overthrow, by Divine wrath, of the edifices raised by the proud self-sufficient nation, when they first return to their land. By their procedure (aided by false prophets) to intrench themselves in their promised inheritance, without penitent

* Chapter xiii. 14.

submission to God, they will have practically said, “peace, when there was no peace;”* and so their very handiwork shall be made the means of inflicting on them the Divine retribution.

And in the earthquake were slain of men seven thousand.] Such will be amongst the fatal consequences of the earthquake which will affect Jerusalem. And we can conceive of the terrible scene of desolation and woe, which that city will thus present, from what is recorded concerning phenomena of the kind in modern times. For example, describing the particulars of that memorable earthquake which happened at Lisbon in the year 1755. A spectator has written as follows:—“With regard to the buildings, it was observed that the solidest in general fell the first. Every parish church, convent, nunnery, palace, and public edifice, with an infinite number of private houses, were either thrown down or so miserably shattered, that it was rendered dangerous to pass by them.” Thus, we can easily conceive, how, by means of the earthquake before us, the day of the Lord, as the Prophet Isaiah says, “*shall be upon every high tower and upon every fenced wall.*” Isa. ii. 15. But the dreadful suffering and mortality of the scene may be collected from what the same writer adds that he witnessed in Lisbon:—“The scenes of horror I met with exceed all

* Verse 16.

description; nothing could be heard but sighs and groans: I did not meet with a soul in the passage who was not bewailing the death of his nearest relations and dearest friends, or the loss of all his substance; I could hardly take a single step without treading on the dead or the dying; in some places lay coaches, with their masters, horses, and riders, *almost* crushed in pieces; here mothers with infants in their arms; there ladies richly dressed; priests, friars, gentlemen, mechanics, either in the same condition, or just expiring; some had their backs or thighs broken, others vast stones on their breasts; some lay almost buried in the rubbish, and crying out in vain to the passengers for succour, were left to perish with the rest.*

But to turn from this picture of what may be supposed will yet be presented in Jerusalem, it is necessary to observe, that the seven thousand who are specified as perishing, are described as belonging to the *male* population. Moreover, the strict rendering of the original is *seven thousand names of men*, an expression very like that which is employed by the Septuagint in Genesis vi. 4. “*men of renown.*” Perhaps, therefore, we should regard the same idea as conveyed here, and that these parties who are slain by the earthquake in Jerusalem are men of note, who, like Korah and

* Letters on Literature by the Rev. Charles Davy.

his company of old, who perished similarly, will yet signalize themselves in apostacy from God. It is remarkable, also, that Korah and his company are similarly denominated, “famous in the congregation, *men of renown*.” Num. xvi. 2.

May it not be, it is submitted, further, to the intelligent reader, that the diminution thus effected as well as by the progress of war, among the male population in Jerusalem, has a connexion in the way of cause with the remarkable competition for husbands, which it appears will characterize Jewish females, according to the Prophet Isaiah:—“In that day seven women shall take hold of one man, saying, we will eat our own bread, and wear our own apparel; only let us be called by thy name, to take away our reproach. Isaiah iv. 1. Nor is there any thing to mar this inference in the note of time belonging to the two prophecies, but rather the reverse. For while the men in question perish in the earthquake, it seems to be immediately subsequent to such event that the women pursue the course alleged. They will act thus, says the Prophet, “*in that day* ;” and the character of that day is given in the verse preceding:—“her gates (i. e. of Jerusalem) shall lament and mourn; and she being desolate shall sit upon the ground.” Isaiah iii. 26. Added to this, in the beginning of the Chapter, we seem to have an enumeration of parties taken away out of Jerusalem

by the Judgment of God, whose description quite coincides with the import above assigned to the unusual expression, *names of men*;—"Behold the Lord, the Lord of hosts, doth take away from Jerusalem and from Judah. . .the mighty man, and the man of war, the judge, and the prophet, and the prudent and the ancient, the captain of fifty, and the honourable man, and the counsellor, and the cunning artificer, and the eloquent orator." (Isaiah iii. 1—3.)

If this comparison between the vision before us and the Prophet Isaiah, be maintainable, of course, those who perish by the earthquake, must be regarded as belonging to the *Jewish* inhabitants of the city; and, indeed, the clause which follows is confirmatory of this.

And the remnant were affrighted.] Thus, the fearful demonstration just given of the Lord's righteous judgments, has effect upon the surviving remnant of the Jewish inhabitants. Hitherto, even under the visitation of the fifth trumpet, they had continued unmoved, repenting not of their various wickednesses. See Chap. ix. 20—21. But now, the humbling process has become effectual, and a reverential fear of God possesses them.

And gave glory to the God of heaven.] This is a general expression for repentance. Thus we read, "Give glory to the Lord your God." Jer. xiii. 16. But the phrase is sometimes used in a more limited

sense to signify *confession of sin*; as for example, when Achan was carried out of the camp to be stoned, Joshua, we read, adjured him to “*give glory to God*,” that is, as shown by Achan’s reply—to acknowledge his guilt in the matter of which he had been convicted. Josh. vii. 19. And so, in the ixth of John, a passage upon which this last reference throws light. When the Pharisees addressed themselves to the blind man to whom our Lord had given sight, with the view of getting him to admit that he had been acting the impostor, and that the Lord had not wrought the alleged miracle upon him, their words were,—not as it is in our translation, “give God the praise,” as though they allowed the miracle, but would have it ascribed to God, (and the context gives no countenance to this view), but simply—‘*give glory to God*,’ that is, ‘tell the truth, and confess the imposture.’ Now, it is the very same Greek phrase employed here, and in the Septuagint of Josh. vii. 19, which we have before us touching the survivors of the earthquake. Accordingly, the meaning may only be, that they at length were brought to acknowledge their wickedness, which had provoked God to pour out his wrath upon them. And here, may come in the exclamation of the Prophet:—“Lord, in trouble have thy visited thee; they poured out a prayer when thy chastening was upon them.” Isa. xxvi. 16.

Ver. 14. *The second woe is past; and behold the third woe cometh quickly.*] An interjected announcement similar to this, we had in Chap. ix. 12, after the rehearsal of the fifth trumpet; except that there we met not with the note of immediate sequence which we have here, touching the woes in reserve. Here that note occurs, as though to intimate that the final consummating plagues of wrath upon the wicked Gentiles, contained under the seventh Trumpet, would immediately descend.

Ver. 15. *And the seventh angel sounded.*] This is the last trumpet of the series; and the sounding of it by the seventh angel, as already observed, initiates the outpouring of the vial plagues. And as these plagues consummate God's work of judgment on the earth, before the Lord Jesus personally appears upon the scene, to establish his kingdom; the Spirit hastens, as it were, to take advantage of this, and to celebrate by anticipation the concomitants and results of that glorious event.

Amongst these, the reader will perceive, is included a resurrection, obviously, of the righteous; and thus there may naturally be a disposition to identify this trumpet with "the last trump" spoken of by the Apostle Paul in his Epistle to the Corinthians: "Behold I show you a mystery: we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, *at the last trump*; for *the trumpet shall sound*, and

the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed." 1 Cor. xv. 51, 52. But, is it so, that the saints of this dispensation, to whose resurrection and rapture it is manifest that the Apostle here alludes, are the same with those contemplated under the sounding of the seventh trumpet? The Author submits not. In fact, the former have been already gathered to meet their Lord in the air; and as we have seen in Chap. iv. of this book, will be administrators with Him of the judgments that will then run their course on the earth. But, as at their resurrection, the Apostle had written in his Epistle to the Thessalonians—an Epistle which preceded by some years, that to the Corinthians,—that there would be the sounding of the "*trump of God*;" so in this latter Epistle, referring to the same, he terms it *the last trump*; not, however, because of its closing the series mentioned in the Apocalypse,—which we must remember had not then been given to John—but rather, it may be presumed, because of *the last trump* constituting the signal of a consummated undertaking, as evinced on the occasion of the capture of Jericho. Indeed, even the former reference—that in the Epistle to the Thessalonians—seems to point to this memorable precedent; for, though it denominates not the trump as the *last* one: yet it associates with it the Lord's descending with "*a shout*," an equally striking

feature in the taking of Jericho ; for, together with the last sounding of the trumpets by the priests, Joshua giving the word, we read that “ *the people shouted with a great shout.*” Joshua vi. 20. Thus both these passages, though by a different index, sufficiently point to Old Testament history as the scope of the Apostle’s allusion ; and we are relieved from the perplexity of having to synchronize the resurrection of believers under this dispensation with the resurrection under the seventh trumpet.

And there were great voices in heaven.] These voices issue, we may presume, from the throne in the heavens, as described in Chap. iv.—The glorified Church and innumerable hosts of angels thus uttering their congratulations at the approaching fulfilment of the Divine purpose, although to be ushered in amidst still more awful demonstrations of judgment—

Saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ.] Such is the happy consummation which the foregoing voices in heaven are heard celebrating. Through the perspective, as it were, of the vial-plagues, the time is thus joyfully descried, in which God’s dominion shall prevail throughout the whole earth ; when, in fact, the kingdom shall have come, and the Divine will be done in earth, as it is in heaven—the blessed hope as it has been presented to the eye of faith in all ages.

Nor ought this emphatic anticipation of the future, be lost on those Christians who are wont to conceive of our Lord's kingdom as merely spiritual, and invisible in its nature. The kingdoms of this world are not invisible, but palpable realities; and why should not that sovereignty into which they are all to merge, be equally palpable? It is true that now the Spirit of God is secretly working in the world, gathering out of it "the heavenly family," that with Jesus, their glorious Head, shall preside over the kingdom; and so, during this dispensation, it is in abeyance. It is true, also, as our Lord himself said to Pilate, His kingdom "is not of this world,"* that is, in the sense of being derived from it; but this means not that His kingdom will not be over the world, any more than His disclaimer concerning John's baptism, that it was not "*of men*,"† imported that men were not the subjects of it.

Blessed, indeed, truly blessed shall be the extension of true religion at the period contemplated amongst mankind: "All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before him;"‡ and where is the Christian heart to which such prospect is not dear? But let us not overlook *how* all this is to be brought about, according to what the Psalmist adds: "*For the*

* John xviii. 36.

† Mat. xxi. 25.

‡ Psalm xxii 27.

kingdom is the Lord's, and he is the governor among the nations." Psalm xxii. 28. And again, "He hath remembered his mercy and his truth towards the house of Israel: all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God." Psalm xcvi. 3. Thus we see by these two texts, and they are heads under which, respectively, numerous others may be found to range, that the salvation and good government of the world are yet to flow from the two-fold relationship of Jesus—the Seed of Abraham—the Son of David. And until He appears in His glory building up Zion, the nations, as such, shall not be blessed, neither judgment nor justice be executed in the earth.

It is observable, that in this celebration of the kingdom by the heavenly choir, it is regarded as the kingdom of their Lord and of "*Him the Christ.*" Such is the literal rendering. Nor is the addition of this last title without its use, for it serves as we shall see, to the right interpretation of the following clause.

And he shall reign for ever and ever.] Remembering that this eternal dominion is predicated of our blessed Lord as *the Christ*, we can take it in its fullest acceptation, although elsewhere it is said that after accomplishing the subjection of all things, He is to deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father.* For, as the Christ,

* 1 Cor. xv. 24.

it belongs to him to hold all power of the Father; and the Apostle's proposition only means that this shall be duly manifested, when the time comes. It is not a *surrender* of the kingdom which the Apostle ascribes to our Lord, but the *commending* of it, when completely organized, to the Father, under whom he henceforth and for ever ostensibly governs it. The verb employed in the original fully bears this signification, for it is one which is applied to the *recommendation* of Paul and Barnabus to the grace of God,* and again to the *maturity* of the fruits of the earth.† Just then, as we may conceive of a Governor invested with absolute authority in a revolted province, that after having subdued all opposition, he takes the place of the ordinary Vicegerent. So it will be with our blessed Lord. At his second advent he enters upon his reign; which no opposition shall be able to withstand: "He must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet." ver. 25. His reign accordingly, at this stage, seems co-ordinate with that of God. But, adds the Apostle, "When all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject," (i. e. as a subordinate Ruler the Christ) "unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all." ver 28.

* Acts xiv. 26, 40.

† Mark iv. 29.

The following pregnant thoughts upon this great subject, and the still deeper truth in which it has its roots, may not be unacceptable to the reader:—

“ Christ is now sitting, in expectation, at the right hand of the Majesty on high, waiting till the fulness of the times for gathering into one, and subordinating all under His headship, be come. And meanwhile, the Father is giving Him a people to come and reign along with Him—‘ His inheritance in the saints ;’ which times of the Father being accomplished, Christ is manifested again to complete His work of redeeming the inheritance, and bringing it into the condition of eternal order, according to the design of the Father, which being done, He surrenders it up into the Father’s hand, and humbles Himself for ever to remain His Father’s servant.”* Again, the same writer says:—“ God hath a created world, and He put the man Adam into the governance thereof. Adam fell from his lordship into miserable bondage ; whereupon God prepared to provide for Himself another king, who should be worthy to hold the reins of the created world. And this king He found in Christ, whom, after proving His faithfulness,—alone faithful against a world in rebellion,—He promoted to be Lord of all. But herewith ended not His ‘ scheme ; for no sooner is Christ ascended into the heavens, than He

* Irving’s Exposition of the Revelation.—Vol. iii. p. 1241.

receiveth power from God to bring many sons unto the glory of the same royal priesthood. And those whom the Father giveth unto Him, Christ doth straightway wash from their defilements, and proceed to furnish with gifts, and graces, and ornaments, and powers, which may accomplish them for the high dignity to which they have been elected,—of ruling the universe of God.—What, now, may mean these many kings and priests? Is not Christ Lord of all? wherefore then lords many, and priests many? I answer, Yes. Christ is Lord of all, and only High Priest. Yet not the less be there lords many, and priests many; who, being by Him furnished for their high employment, and having all their life long experienced their own innate bondage to the creature, and their lordship over it derived only from Christ, shall, in the ages to come, be the true representatives of His person, and the faithful upholders of His only lordship in the divers regions of creation. How it is to be arranged of God in the ages to come, I take not upon myself to declare at present; but though I were altogether ignorant of the mode and manner thereof, that were no reason for my flinching to declare fully the substance of the words before us, which is, that God is preparing out of fallen manhood a royal family for Himself, whom, under Christ, He may invest with the sceptres and the altars of the created universe;

through whom, and through whom alone, every creature shall present the obedience and the worship, which, to Godhead, it oweth. And they shall present it unto Christ, with whom they are one, bone of His bone, flesh of His flesh, beauty of His beauty, and power of His power; and thus the streams of ascending influence shall, from every holy sphere, concentrate to that place where He in Manhood dwelleth; in that New Jerusalem where Emmanuel, God with us, abideth; and there it passeth into the invisible, and is received into the unsearchable bosom of God.

By the word Christ, many do merely understand the eternal Son of God, wherein they err, not knowing the Scriptures. The Christ of God is not the Son in His Godhead, but the Godhead in the Son made flesh. It is a form of being different from the being of God, inasmuch as the being of God is essentially separate from the creature; the being of Christ is essentially one with the creature; and because one with the creature, the Christ cannot worship Himself, otherwise He worshippeth the creature, in Him especially included; and He therefore worshippeth the being of God separate from the creature; which being of God containeth Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, in their incomprehensible, unsearchable, essential, form of existence; which, as hath been explained above, standeth in the person of the Father. It is one part of the

Son's humiliation to bring Himself to be the Head of the worshippers, and not the end of worship. As the end of worship He hath given, as the Spirit likewise hath, the glory to the Father, being, for their parts, contented to become, in the sight of the creatures—the former, the Head of the worshippers—the latter, the mover and sustainer of the worship. And thus the Godhead standeth disclosed, for the knowledge and for the salvation of the creatures.”*

Ver. 16. *And the four and twenty elders which sat before God on their seats (thrones), fell upon their faces, and worshipped God.*] As the establishment of Messiah's kingdom is especially fraught with blessing to the Jewish nation, their glorified brethren in heaven, represented by the twenty-four elders, hereupon render to God their grateful homage. See Vol. i. pp. 271—273. Their self-prostration, in doing this, shows how filled they are with thoughts of the Divine glory.

Ver. 17. *Saying, we give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come.*] Thus their worship takes the form of thanksgiving; and in the titles they give to God, they celebrate His Almighty power and eternity of being. Of course this worship of God contemplates His glorious manifestation in the Person of the Christ; and so, by Him, in the beginning of

* Ibid. Vol. i. p. 148—150.

this book, we have had these same titles assumed. See Rev. i. 8; also, Vol. i. pp. 24, 25.

Because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned.] This utterance confirms the foregoing view, that to the Lord Jesus, as revealing the Father, the present act of worship is addressed. He is now the anointed King, but rejected by the world, yea, by His own nation—the Jews. As the citizens in the parable, they have sent the message after Him, “We will not have this man to reign over us.” Luke xix. 14. But, ere long, He will assert His right; and, in despite of all His enemies, sit upon His appointed throne. This event, though yet only on the eve of transaction, is realized as accomplished in the hymn of praise before us. Hence, the past tense is used; these glorified ones exhibiting an example of that faith which, relying on the Divine word, “callesth those things which be not as though they were.” Rom. iv. 17.

Ver. 18. *And the nations were angry.]* Thus, instead of the glorious advent of Messiah being hailed by the nations, they will be incensed at the thought of it. And this hostility to the Divine purpose, Psalm ii. prophetically contemplates: “Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against his anointed, saying,

Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us." Ps. ii. 1—3. That the full import of these words extends to beyond the persecuting opposition shown to Christ and His Gospel, at His first advent, cannot be doubted for a moment. The passage, indeed, is thus *applied* in the praise rendered to God by Peter and John, after their dismissal from the presence of the Chief Priests (Acts iv. 25, 26.); and of such *application* it legitimately admits throughout this dispensation. But the Apostles merely quote it, adding, by way of improvement: "Of a truth, against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together, for to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done." Ver. 27, 28. And as they do not predicate of that occasion any *fulfilment* of the Psalm, so the whole context forbids our entertaining such interpretation.

Perhaps, this clearly assigned disaffection of the nations of the earth, to the glorious advent of Messiah, should suggest to us, that, in our translation of Haggai ii. 7, which, contrary hereto, represents the Messiah as "*the desire of all nations*," there is some misapprehension of the mind of the Spirit. Accordingly, it is worthy of remark that Calvin, whose critical sagacity is so generally acknowledged, (and he is followed by

modern writers,) explains the clause in question, in conformity with the Septuagint, to refer to *the treasures of all nations*. “As it immediately follows—*mine is the silver, and mine is the gold*, the more simple meaning is, that the nations would come bringing with them all their riches, that they might offer themselves and all their possessions as a sacrifice to God;”* an interpretation not a little confirmed by the apparently parallel prophecy of Isaiah. See chapter lx., verses 6, 7, 9, 11, 13, 17, which cannot be otherwise understood. Nor is this interpretation inconsistent with the Hebrew, but rather the reverse; for the verb “*come*,” as plural, would indicate the presence of a plural nominative—and although, in this case, the nominative “*desire*” is singular, yet it only requires the addition of a yod (י) to convert it into a plural, and this emendation is obviously preferable to allowing (which we must otherwise do) the solecism to remain, of a plural verb with a singular nominative. To some it may seem that, without emendation, this text is not inharmonious with the passage before us, for that it may simply mean that the advent of Messiah is a *desirable thing* for the nations, just as it is represented to be to the whole inferior creation. Rom. viii. 19—22. But this, it is submitted, would be to introduce a figure of speech where the literal sense

* See Calvin, *in loco*.

can obviously stand without it—a course which, without strong warrant, we ought not to be disposed to pursue.

And thy wrath is come.] Here, again, is a rehearsal of the Spirit's utterance in the second Psalm, and in the same order; for there, just as here, the Divine indignation meets the impotent rage of the nations:—"He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh; the Lord shall have them in derision. Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure." (ver. 4, 5.) And the signal occasion is the same, the establishment of Messiah's kingdom—as the next verse implies: "Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion." (ver. 6.) In the same connexion, this crisis is regarded by the Jewish remnant in Psalm xlvii.: "The heathen raged, the kingdoms were moved: he uttered his voice, the earth melted. The Lord of hosts is with *us*, the God of Jacob is *our* refuge," (ver. 6, 7.) Doubtless, also, this is the subject celebrated in the song of Moses, where we read:—"Rejoice, O ye nations, (that is, the surviving nations,) with his people: for he will avenge the blood of his servants, and will render vengeance to his adversaries, and will be merciful unto his land, and to his people." Deut. xxxii. 43.

And the time of the dead that they should be judged.] By the dead, here, seems to be intended, the righteous dead—the martyrs, under the fifth

seal, together with their fellows, spoken of as to be slain afterwards. The cry of the souls of the former from under the altar, which we may naturally consider common to all was:—"How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" Rev. vi. 10. And, now, the season for which they were enjoined to wait, being at hand, the judgment prayed for is realized as granted. To them, that judgment, all which is committed to the Son of man, will consist of a resurrection to life; and the actual rehearsal of it is presented to us in chapter xx, where we read:—"And I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years." (ver. 4.) That these are the same parties with "the dead" who are contemplated in the clause before us, we may reasonably conclude. At the same time, as the taking his saints to a resurrection of life is but one part of the judicial power assigned to our Lord, and, eventually, is to be succeeded by a resurrection to judgment of the rest of the dead; it is possible that, in this celebration of the future, under the seventh trumpet, there may be a reference to the twofold event.

The reader will observe that the resurrection of the saints of this dispensation, and, indeed, of former dispensations, is a matter not involved here. Already glorified as they are represented to be, in the living creatures and twenty-four elders of chapter iv, their resurrection must necessarily be ante-dated in regard to the visions that follow.

And that thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints.] This seems to be exegetical of the foregoing clause. "The dead," therein referred to, are now defined under the denomination generally of prophets and saints; and, during the reign of Antichrist, we know there will be such (Jewish believers) who will seal their testimony to the truth with their blood. Hence it is said, when vengeance falls upon Babylon, the seat of Antichrist's dominion, that "in her was found the blood of prophets and of saints." Rev. xviii. 24. In resurrection glory, then, shall they at length have their reward, when the Lord Jesus comes to judgment. See Rev. xx. 4.

And them that fear thy name, small and great.] This seems to designate the happy *subjects* of Messiah's reign, the Jewish people, primarily, who shall be in the flesh; for they also shall have their reward when the specified time arrives. And the hope of such is thus enlarged on in the

Psalms :—" The Lord hath been mindful of us : he will bless us ; he will bless the house of Israel ; he will bless the house of Aaron. He will bless them that fear the Lord, both small and great." Psalm cxv. 12, 13.

And shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth.] This will be another concomitant of Messiah's reign. Reclaiming the earth out of the hands of its Antichristian oppressors, he will take vengeance upon them. Or the word " earth " may be translated *land*, signifying the Jewish land, Palestine, which, as we have seen, will be overrun at this time by enemies. And so, the Prophet Daniel declares that " the people of the Prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary." Daniel ix. 26. Our Lord, accordingly, as the Göel of Israel, shall now interpose for the redemption of their inheritance, and pour destruction upon the proud invader and his hosts. Hence, at the prospect of the second advent, we read, and it applies to either scale of interpretation :—" Let the earth be glad. . . . Let the field be joyful, and all that is therein ; then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice before the Lord : for he cometh, for he cometh to judge the earth." Psalm xcvi. 11—13. To this effect, also, the Prophet Isaiah, representing Palestine as one scene of ruin, under the domination of the Antichrist, at once breaks in upon the sorrowful theme with a notice of the Lord's interposition :—

“The highways lie waste, the wayfaring man ceaseth: he hath broken the covenant, he hath despised the cities, he regardeth no man. The earth mourneth and languisheth; Lebanon is ashamed and hewn down; Sharon is like a wilderness; and Bashan and Carmel shake off their fruits. Now will I rise, saith the Lord, now will I be exalted; now will I lift up myself.” And it is worthy of remark, as indicating a parallelism with the vision before us of the sounding of the seventh trumpet, that, in some translations of the Hebrew, (including the Vulgate,) verse 3, of this chapter, begins thus:—“*At the voice of thy angel the people fled.*”

Thus, we see that the earth, fallen as it is, is cared for in the Divine counsels, so that its un pitying desolators bring down judgment upon themselves. It is not then to be annihilated, as some thoughtlessly imagine; but, in its measure, will partake of the redeeming power of the second Adam. And all Scripture recognizes this truth. A purifying process, indeed, awaits this, as well as the other parts of creation, all being defiled by sin; and we learn that the agency of fire will be that employed on the occasion. But it will issue from the furnace, in conformity with redeemed man himself, a brighter and more glorious heritage than it ever was, even “when the morning stars sang together, and the sons of God shouted for joy,”* at its original creation.

* Job xxxviii. 7.

Perhaps it may be well to observe here, that 2 Peter iii. 10, which seems to indicate the complete consumption of the earth by fire, only requires to be differently punctuated, in order to render it harmonious with what has been now advanced; and the well-known rule of a neuter-plural taking after it a verb singular, requires this emendation. Accordingly, the verse should be thus read:—"The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also; and the works that are therein shall be burnt up." By this reading, it is manifest that the "burning up," in question, is predicated, not of *the earth itself*, though it indeed will undergo a fermenting heat, but of the works that are therein—the monuments of man's perverted ingenuity.

Ver. 19. *And the temple of God was opened in heaven.*] From several allusions in Scripture, it would seem as though the dwelling place of the Divine Majesty in heaven were a temple. Thus we read in Psalm xi.: "The Lord is in his holy temple;" and this is connected with the apparently equivalent proposition which follows: "the Lord's throne is in heaven." Ps. xi. 4. In a preceding vision, also, we have had corresponding imagery employed in reference to the angelic

ministration which ushers in the trumpet visitations. See ch. viii. 1—5. And when we remember that the temple at Jerusalem, as originally built by Solomon, was constructed after a pattern shown by God to David (in like manner as the tabernacle previously built by Moses) it ought to occur to us as not improbable that here that pattern, or archetype, is alluded to. May we not identify it, also, with the antitypical tabernacle of which St. Paul speaks, when contrasting it with its type, he describes it as “the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched and not man?” Heb. viii. 2—5. It may be important to observe, that in this passage it is not the Levitical service *generally* which is said to have its counterpart in heaven, but the sacred enclosure itself, wherein the Priests exercised their religious functions; and so verse 5 ought to be translated—‘who *worship* (*λατρευουσι*) in the example and shadow of heavenly things,’ *i. e.* the Mosaic tabernacle. Of course, it is not intended to exclude from the reader’s mind, in connexion with the tabernacle, the other typical instruction on the subject which relates to the Person and work of Christ; this interferes not with the view here submitted, that the tabernacle itself, as an edifice, was a model of heavenly places, even where Christ sitteth now at the right hand of God.

And there was seen in his temple the ark of his

testament.] In the vision introductory to the trumpet visitations,—the golden altar being employed, which was wont to come into requisition when Israel became involved in any national sin, (Lev. iv. 13—18,) suggested, we have seen, the purport of those visitations towards that people. Here the formal exhibition of the ark of the testament, or covenant, preparatory to the vial plagues upon Israel's Gentile oppressors, is similarly appropriate. For, this appurtenance of the tabernacle, as the symbol of the Divine mercy and faithfulness to Israel, was never commissioned to be used except for good to that people. Thus, "as soon as the soles of the feet of the priests that bare the ark of the Lord" were dipped in the waters of Jordan, a passage was made for the people on dry ground. Jos. iii. 13, 17. Again, at the fall of Jericho, the ark of the Lord was carried round the devoted city, and had to do with its subsequent destruction. (Josh. vi.) Accordingly, its capture by the Philistines became afterwards the occasion of that bitter wailing of Eli's daughter-in-law, when, with expiring breath, naming her just born child "*Ichabod*," she exclaimed: "the glory is departed from Israel, for the ark of God is taken." 1 Sam. iv. 22.

But, perhaps, analogous to the heavenly site of this temple, we should regard the ark here spoken of, not as identical with that deposited in the

earthly temple, which enshrined the moral law, or ten commandments ; but as relatively answering to it. And if the one had a favourable aspect towards Israel, much more the other ; at least, if we may regard it as the symbol of that Divine grace which will yet triumph over all their past failure. And so, it is observable, the description is not “ the ark of *the* testament,” the usual form of expression, but “ the ark of *his* testament,” as though to contrast God’s absolute unconditional covenant “ I will ” and “ ye shall,” with the conditional covenant that could make nothing perfect. Hence, also, the time is emphatically noticed, when, corresponding to the difference between these two covenants, the restored Jews shall say no more, “ The ark of the covenant of the Lord : neither shall it come to mind : neither shall they visit it : neither shall it be magnified * any more. At that time they shall call Jerusalem the throne of the Lord ; and all the nations shall be gathered unto it, to the name of the Lord, to Jerusalem.” Jer. iii. 16, 17. When “ the ark of the covenant ” was their boast, they were still without any stable settlement in their land. But now, as the fruit of God’s “ better covenant,” they shall be established in blessedness, of which their festive capitol, honoured with the Divine presence, shall be the index for all the world to behold. See Psalm xlviii.

* See marginal reading.

And there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail.]

These demonstrations, accompanying the exhibition of the ark of God's covenant, as here explained, obviously intimate, that amidst such terrifying phenomena will God now plead with the confederated enemies of Israel. Accordingly, on the outpouring of the seventh vial, these very phenomena are enumerated as attendant upon the note of consummation, *It is done*: "And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great. And there fell upon men a great hail out of heaven, every stone about the weight of a talent: and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail; for the plague thereof was exceeding great." Ch. xvi. 17, 18, 21. See also Isaiah xxix. 6; Psalm xviii. 12; and on Chapter iv. 5.

CHAPTER XII.

Verses 1—17.

1 And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars:

2 And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered,

3 And there appeared another wonder in heaven ; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads.

4 And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth : and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born.

5 And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron : and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne.

6 And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred *and* threescore days.

7 And there was war in heaven : Michael and his angels fought against the dragon ; and the dragon fought and his angels,

8 And prevailed not ; neither was their place found any more in heaven.

9 And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceived the whole world : he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

10 And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ : for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night.

11 And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony ; and they loved not their lives unto the death.

12 Therefore rejoice, *ye* heavens, and *ye* that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea ! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.

13 And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man *child*.

14 And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent.

15 And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood.

16 And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth.

17 And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.

THIS chapter, and indeed the three following, interrupt the strict chronological order of the narrative introduced by the sounding of the seventh trumpet—the signal, as already observed, for the outpouring of the seven vials. So that this portion of the book, is, so to speak, parenthetical—the Spirit herein rehearsing, in detail, the events of Jewish suffering and of Antichristian tyranny, in Jerusalem, for the period just named. In fact, a mere outline of the subject had been pursued up to this point; and now there is a traversing of the ground over again to supply further information. The last verse, however, of chap. xi. is manifestly designed as a link for the renewed recital, in chapter xv. 5, to fit into, when this collateral matter is disposed of.

Ver. 1. *And there appeared a great wonder.*] This means a symbol of weighty import.

In heaven.] As we shall presently see, the subject of this symbol (the Jewish people) properly belongs to earth. But, as on earth, at the time contemplated, the aspect of this people, to the eye

of sense, was very different from that which they had in the mind of God, and the object here is to portray the latter; therefore, the scene of the vision is laid accordingly. Thus, at the very outset, we have intimation that only faith in the Divine promises could appreciate beforehand the glorious position assigned to the daughter of Zion.

A woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet.] This is manifestly a symbol of the Jewish nation; that is, of Jerusalem, glorified as she will yet be, and has been, from the beginning, in the purpose of God. Thus it is, that, in Joseph's dream, his father, mother, and brethren, (that is, including himself—the house of Jacob with the twelve Patriarchs) are represented. See Gen. xxxvii. 9, 10; Cant. vi. 10.

Ver. 2. *And she being with child, cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered.*] The Jewish nation, pregnant with the hope of their promised Messiah, might be thus fitly described in reference to many periods of their history. But the particular crisis here contemplated seems to be that of Messiah's advent. Such was then the darkness of the heathen world, and the abject thralldom of the Jewish people, (for Judea was a Roman province,) that amongst the faithful remnant who constituted the heirs of the promise before God, the Psalmist's words

must have been often used:—"It is time for thee, Lord, to work, for they have made void thy law." Psalm cxix. 126. And it is on record, in the Gospel, that, at the birth of our Lord, there were those, in Jerusalem, who "looked for redemption,"* and "waited for the consolation of Israel,"† and that redemption and consolation was identified with the birth of the virgin's son, according to the glowing language of Isaiah: "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this." Isaiah ix. 6, 7, With the exercise of faith, which this and numerous similar prophecies were calculated to inspire in the faithful remnant, we can easily conceive of their being fitly represented by the symbol before us of a travailing woman.

The only point on which a difficulty is likely to occur to the mind, lies, perhaps, in the assignment of such a long past event as the first advent, to an allusion occurring in the midst of prophecies confessedly relating to the future.

* Luke ii. 38.

+ Luke ii. 25.

But, it is submitted, that for this a sufficient reason is to be found in the design of the revealing Spirit; that design being, as observed in a former part of this work, to lay bare the root of Satan's enmity, which is yet to be so fearfully exhibited against the Jewish people. A retrogression of this kind, in plain narrative, is of frequent occurrence. For example, in the Evangelist's record of Herod's apprehension concerning Jesus, that he was John the Baptist risen from the dead, whom he had beheaded, the Spirit pauses in his recital, and goes back to explain how it was that Herod was thus led to deal with one of whom he had stood in some degree of awe. Thus comes in the story of Herodias' quarrel against John; and, at last, how she artfully compassed his death by means of her daughter's dancing in Herod's presence. Mark vi. 14—28.

It is after this manner that, in the vision before us, the prophetic rehearsal of the future persecution of the Jewish people is interrupted for a moment, to remind us of its original cause; which is of course described symbolically, for the sake of congruity with the character of the entire prophecy.

Ver. 3. *And there appeared another wonder in heaven.*] A portentous exhibition similar to the former. Its being in like manner seen "*in heaven,*" may denote that cognizance of the agency intended, was only obvious to those who were enlightened of God, that is, to the eye of faith; or, it may

signify, as glancing at this agency from the beginning, that it has had its seat, even as it has still, in the supernal regions." See Ephe. vi. 12.

And behold a great red dragon.] By this symbol is clearly intended "THE DEVIL AND SATAN;" indeed these are the equivalent expressions of the Spirit. See ver. 9. The colour *red* is ascribed to him, perhaps, to suggest the idea of his blood-thirstiness, his being "a murderer from the beginning;"* or it may be rendered *fiery*, as signifying the terrible aspect that he presents to the beholder.

Having seven heads, and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads.] This monstrous combination, it is remarkable, sums up the prominent particulars of Daniel's four beasts, or kingdoms, which are represented in chap. vii. of his prophecy. The first beast, we read, "was like a lion." ver. 4. Here is *one* head. The second was "like to a bear." ver. 5. This makes *two* heads. Then the third was "like a leopard," . . . which "had also four heads." ver. 6. This added to the preceding, exhibits *six* heads. And the complement of the remaining head required to make *the seven*, is yielded by the description of the fourth beast, which of course had one head; and this beast, moreover, furnishes the completion of the picture, for he is described as having "*ten horns*." Thus these four bestial empires, which are yet to play

* John viii. 44.

their part upon the earth, will be but an organized manifestation of the diabolical energy of Satan, the god of this world ; and though this precise form of opposition to the kingdom of God was not at once assumed by him at his fall, or developed at the time of the first advent, to which the vision points ; yet was Satan, we can conceive, always identified with it in the Divine mind ; and an earnest of it was significantly displayed when the Roman empire essayed its abortive efforts against the infant Messiah. Be it observed, also, that that empire (related in like manner to three preceding ones) was, in that age, the great engine of Satan's power, rehearsing, as it were, its yet future operations when it shall be revived. Thus, as the one party in the scene, the Jewish people, are contemplated in the aspect of consummated glory with which the prophetic word invests them ; so it is with Satan, he is represented as contending with them in the full possession of those resources which he will eventually employ. But still, we are not to overlook that, amidst all these resources, it is to this great enemy of God, *personally*, the vision before us directs our attention ; for it is remarkable, that here the dragon's seven *heads* wear the crowns ; whereas, when his concerted universal empire comes to be represented in the person of the Antichrist, (see ch. xiii. 2) the crowns are upon the symbolic *horns* of the latter.

Ver. 4. *And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth.*]

This additional representation seems to belong to the further history of the Devil ; and is, perhaps, designed to remind us of his angels, who, in various other allusions of Scripture, are associated with him. They may well be depicted as fallen stars involved in the catastrophe of their great leader, which, though it has not yet reached the stage of precipitation to the earth, is eventually to do so ; and the purport of a following vision is to rehearse this very scene. See ver. 9.

On this point, the reader will remember that already, in this book,* the symbol of a fallen star has been employed to denote an evil angel, so that a plain precedent is laid for the adoption of the idea here. A difficulty in assenting to it will, no doubt, be suggested from the confessedly different import of the apparently parallel prophecy of Daniel, where a formidable power is spoken of as “ waxing great, even to (or rather against) the host of heaven,” and casting “ down some of the host and of the stars to the ground, and stamping upon them.” Dan. viii. 10. But this latter power is manifestly that of the Antichrist, whose appearance on the stage is subsequent to the action in question of the dragon ; for, it is not until the dragon is cast out of heaven that he

proceeds to employ the Antichrist as his agent ; (see Rev. xiii.), whose actings, announced in the foregoing words of Daniel, relate, perhaps, to his success against the dignitaries of the restored temple-worship at Jerusalem : a solution somewhat confirmed not only by the context, but especially by ver. 12, where the figure of speech is dropped, and the recital is simply that an host (*i.e.* an army or power) was given him against the daily sacrifice by reason of transgression, and “ it *cast down the truth to the ground*, and it practised, and prospered.”

And the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born.] We can easily imagine this to have been the posture and design of Satan from the beginning,—lying in wait for the promised Seed of the woman, who was also to be the hope of the Jewish nation. Accordingly, no sooner was Messiah born into the world, than, through the instrumentality of Herod, who slaughtered the children of Bethlehem, did Satan seek to compass his object. Nor did he intermit his pursuit of it, we may be assured, throughout our Lord's career. To this end was directed at least *one* of the temptations in the wilderness ; and, as we can apprehend, the attempt of the people of Nazareth upon the life of Jesus. Luke iv. 28, 29. It is probable, also, the same

was designed by the sudden tempest which agitated the sea of Tiberias, when the ship in which the beloved of the Father lay asleep was well-nigh sinking. Mark iv. 37—41. For it is remarkable that when our Lord woke up, on the occasion, at the call of the disciples, and interposed His mighty power, “He *rebuked* the wind, and said unto the sea, *Peace, be still*”—all which words of authority imply that some personal agent was at work, exciting adversely these elements of nature. See Matt. xvii. 18; Luke xviii. 39; Matt. xxii. 34.

Ver. 5. *And she brought forth a man child.*] This seems clearly to relate to the birth of our blessed Lord, which event, as already observed, was celebrated beforehand by Isaiah, as not only to the Virgin’s honor, but as the consummation of Jewish hope at large. See Isaiah vii. 14; ix. 6.

Moreover, it is worthy of remark, that, by the designation of *child*, our Lord is elsewhere characterized by the Spirit even in reference to the maturity of his manhood: “For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together.” Acts iv. 27.

Who was to rule (is about to rule) all nations with a rod of iron.] This assigned course of action, predicated of the man-child, exactly accords

with the prophecy of the second Psalm, wherein Jehovah addresses the Son as follows: "Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel." Psalm ii. 8, 9. This stern administration, however, of the kingly office of our Lord will but initiate His reign of peace; just as in the double historical type, constituted of David and Solomon, the career of the one as *the man of war* was introductory to the benignant sway of the other.

Association with our Lord, in this exercise of power over the nations, the reader will remember, is one subject of promise to the martyred witnesses of the seven Churches. See vol. i., p. 175.

And her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne.] In harmony with the foregoing interpretation of the vision, we cannot doubt that this refers to our Lord's ascension,—his being received up into heaven, and sitting at the right hand of God, as described in the Gospel by St. Mark, ch. xvi. 19. See also Acts i. 9—11; ii. 33; iii. 21. Heb. i. 3.

Ver. 6. *And the woman fled into the wilderness.]* The obvious meaning of this, pursuing the interpretation already advanced, is that a large body of the Jewish people, a principal nucleus of the

future happy nation, having had to forsake the city and land of their fathers, to which they are yet to return, will betake themselves for refuge to the wilderness or mountainous regions around. The *reason* of their flight however, indicated by the context already considered, is not here stated, but simply *the fact*. The former is presently given in ver. 13, in connexion with the account of Satan's desperate resistance to his coming destiny.

The point, in this interpretation, on which perhaps the reader will conceive a grave objection to exist, is the sudden transition to be admitted from the period of the first advent to that of the second; the whole of the present dispensation being taken no account of. But, on reflection, this cannot constitute a difficulty; for, viewing the book,—as from the outset we have seen reason to do,—namely, as a renewal of the thread of Old Testament prophecy, it is only in accordance with the tenor of the latter, that the interval in question should be omitted.* And let us not forget that however important such interval may be esteemed in human judgment; however vast and momentous we may conceive its events to be; yet, as the time of Israel's blindness it is called of God “a small moment.” Isaiah liv. 7. Not,

* See Introductory Essay —“Apocalyptic Interpretation.” Pages 19—24, 30—52, 54.

indeed, that the gathering of the Church, which is now going on, was not included; yea, and specially, in the purpose of God; nor as though it has not already occupied a considerable period of the world's history; but this was "a mystery hid in God,"* as the Apostle speaks, from the foundation of the world, and how soon it might close was always left in suspense.

That, in the recital of this vision, therefore, all allusion to the present dispensation should be omitted, and the Spirit, at once, proceed (after reverting to Messiah's birth and exaltation) with the crisis of Jewish experience yet to come, ought not to surprise us, but rather be commended to us, as analogous to the other prophetic Scriptures.

Here let us reflect, for a moment, on what is recorded concerning Israel in former days. Is it not a fact that when they were brought out of Egypt, God led them into the wilderness; and miraculously fed and sustained them there for forty years? This is a piece of history concerning the Jewish people, furnished to us in all its minutest features. And that these things are types, not only of the redemption of the Church, but also, and more especially, of the experience of the same people yet to be realized in the eventful period of the last days, cannot be

* Ephes. iii. 9.

doubted, written as that experience is in such similar language. May not, in like manner, Elijah's sojourn in the wilderness, when he fled from the face of Jezebel, rehearse what is here predicted, looking at the fugitives, in question, as a remnant of faithful ones, persecuted by the Antichrist, who is now running his career? And what clearly confirms this position is our Lord's prophecy on the Mount, wherein, after setting forth the evil to come upon Jerusalem, in its being compassed with armies, he makes this the signal for flight from the devoted city:—"Then let them which are in Judea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto. For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled." Luke xxi. 21, 22.* In the Prophet Ezekiel, also,

* In the parallel passage in St. Matthew's Gospel, the signal for flight is varied. It is the beholding the abomination of desolation standing in the holy place. But we can easily conceive this to be contemporaneous with the siege of the city; and that when the enemy without makes his assault, his partizans within will proceed to their extremity of impiety and profaneness. And that such will be the plan of procedure is indicated by the Prophet Daniel: "He (the Antichrist) shall even return, and shall have intelligence with them that forsake the holy covenant. And arms shall stand on his part, and they shall pollute the sanctuary of strength, and shall take away the daily sacrifice, and they shall place the abomination that maketh desolate. Dan. xi. xxx. 31. See also Ezek. vii. 22.

the character of this escaped remnant seems to be recited: "But they that escape of them shall escape, and shall be on the mountains like doves of the valleys, all of them mourning, every one for his iniquity." Ezek. vii. 16.

To see the identity of import, as already hinted, between "the mountains," and "the wilderness," it is only necessary to compare Luke i. 39, with ver. 80. In the former, the birthplace of John the Baptist is denominated "*the hill country*;" and, in the latter, the expression employed for the same locality is "the deserts"—the same word in the original as "wilderness," only in the plural number.

Where she hath a place prepared of God.] Thus, as in the case of Elijah, this remnant have an asylum provided for them in the wilderness. Nor are we without notice elsewhere of the particular region which will thus prove hospitable to them. For, in the Prophet Isaiah, we have the following record touching their benefactors:—"The inhabitants of the land of Tema brought water to him that was thirsty, they prevented with their bread him that fled. For they fled from the swords, from the drawn sword, and from the bent bow, and from the grievousness of war."* Isaiah xxi. 14, 15. Now the land of Tema

* Is not this the key to the right understanding of the judgment of the nations in the Gospel of St. Matthew? Identifying himself

is situated in Arabia Deserta, and that it is in this direction the persecuted Jews will flee from Jerusalem, in their coming hour of tribulation, is further indicated by what we read in chap. xvi. of the same Prophet, where—after a prediction which I incline to believe, with a modern Translator, ought to be rendered thus:—"It shall be that as a wandering bird cast out of the nest, so my daughters, O Moab, shall be at the fords of Arnon,"† referring to the fugitive daughters of Zion—Moab is charged to afford them hospitable shelter. "Take counsel, execute judgment; make thy shadow as the night in the midst of the noon-day; hide the outcasts; bewray not him that wandereth. Let mine outcasts dwell with thee, Moab; be thou a covert to them from the face of the spoiler: for the extortioner is at an end, the spoiler ceaseth, the oppressors are consumed out of the land." Isaiah xvi. 3, 4. It does not appear, indeed, that the Moabites of this period, any more than their ancestors of old, when Israel came out of Egypt, render the favor thus bespoken at their hands. On the contrary, it seems, from numerous passages,

with the persecuted remnant before us, as his brethren, the Lord Jesus, sitting upon the throne of his glory, will say to the nations on his right hand: "I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink. . . . Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." Matt. xxv. 35—40.

+ Govett's Isaiah.

that they will combine with other enemies, especially their neighbours, the Edomites and Ammonites, to harass and molest the afflicted fugitives.* Accordingly, fearful retribution will be inflicted on these several nations at the hands of Israel, when they come into the ascendant. Isaiah xi. 14; xxv. 10. But it is plain, from the Scriptures adduced, that the route of the suffering Jews will lie through these countries on their way to Arabia. And as Teman,—whose inhabitants we have seen are to prove benefactors to Israel,—is certainly situated in that region, so its great wilderness (that of Arabia) we may not doubt to be the destined place of safety into which the symbolic woman, before us, flees.

That they should feed her there.] That there will be a renewal of miracle in the sustentation of the remnant in question is sufficiently indicated by the context; but this is not incompatible with their also receiving the ministrations of human kindness in conformity with the typical experience of Elijah in like circumstances, who, after being fed miraculously by the ravens, was then sustained by the widow of Zarephath; and so it is implied here that the people among whom the remnant are scattered will fall in with the Divine purpose,—“that *they* should feed her.”

* Psalm lxxxiii. 6; Jer. xlviii. 25—27; Zeph. ii. 8.

A thousand two hundred and threescore days.] This is manifestly parallel with the period during which the Witnesses prophecy in Jerusalem, and the hostile nations infest the holy city. After its capture, no egress, we can conceive, will be allowed to the inhabitants who have neglected, or been unable to profit by, the appointed signal for flight; and they accordingly will have to endure the brunt of Antichristian tyranny. Perhaps that cry in the 55th Psalm: "Oh that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away, and be at rest. Lo, then would I wander far off, and remain in the wilderness," (ver. 6, 7,) sets forth the mourning accents of some of them longing to share in the wilderness the circumstances of their more favoured brethren. And here we learn the security of those brethren for the definite time in question.

Ver. 7. *And there was war in heaven.]* The previous part of the chapter has represented the hatred of the dragon towards the offspring of the woman—the Lord Jesus; and then the transferral of that hatred to the woman herself—the Jewish people. But, hereupon, the Spirit makes another digression to tell us of a preliminary event which will precipitate Satan's measures of hostility, namely, his expulsion from heaven, which he still infests with his presence; for he is not yet cast out from thence. Accordingly, as we read of his having access to the heavenly courts in the time of the

patriarch Job ; so *we* are warned, as the Church of God, that *there* is the centre of his agency now :—" We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against wicked spirits in heavenly places." (Ephes. vi. 12, marg. reading.) Nor will Satan and his hosts suffer themselves to be deposed from their place of ascendancy without conflict with the armies of Jehovah. The heavenly regions, therefore, will be the scene of an awful collision between the powers of light and darkness.

Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon fought and his angels.] Here the contending parties are formally defined. But we also learn, that the aggression will commence on the side of God's holy champions ; the leader of whom is named Michael ; the same, doubtless, alluded to under the denomination of Archangel in Jude, ver. 9 ; and also in the Prophet Daniel, where we read : " And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people ; and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time : and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book." Dan. xii. 1. As the chief of those heavenly beings that " excel in strength," it would thus appear, that as he was

commissioned of old to withstand Satan; so he will be again in the latter day, and in behalf of the Jews—Daniel's people. Here, however, we may consider the prerogative of the Church of this dispensation to be also contemplated, according to the assurance given them by the Apostle:—"The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly." Rom. xvi. 20. This would seem to indicate that at the period of war in heaven, the translation of the saints is to take place; and, indeed, such event may initiate this war; for the heavens cannot well harbour two such opposing forces: and, at this due season, Michael and his angels may be the executive employed by the glorified Church to effect the work of expulsion. Their acting thus, would only be in accordance with their province of "ministering spirits sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation." Heb. i. 14.

Ver. 8. *And prevailed not, neither was their place found any more in heaven.*] Thus the resistance of Satan proves abortive. He cannot any longer maintain his lodgment in the heavenly places; and this is the prelude to his undergoing the full execution of the Divine judgment, when he exhausts the short interval now and again to be allotted him on the earth.

Ver. 9. *And the great dragon was cast out.*] Thus the formal issue of the contest is summed up. Satan is ejected from the heavens.

Again the reader is reminded that this is a vision of the future, and not a rehearsal of the past, according to the tradition derived from Milton, the poet. Nor, as has been already observed,* do the texts (2 Pet. ii. 4; Jude 6) adduced to eke out such tradition, apply to the subject here treated; for the angels therein referred to are a different class altogether to the Devil and his angels.

That old serpent called the Devil and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world.] Thus the enemy in question is clearly identified. He is the same that abode not in the truth, according to the emphatic words of our Lord, (John viii. 44); the same that tempted our first parents in the garden, and has been, and shall be, the deceiver of mankind unto the end.

He was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.] This reiterated recital of the event shows the interest that attaches to it, in the mind of God; and it should have the same to us, as the beginning of creation's actual redemption. The inclusion here of his angels, in this catastrophe affecting Satan himself, confirms the view already advanced of the import of the dragon's tail drawing the third part of the stars of heaven, and casting them to the earth. See on ver. 4.

Ver. 10. *And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and*

* See pp. 38, 43, and vol. i. 121—123.

the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ.]

That, in this celebration of praise, the glorified saints who are now translated to the heavens, take a leading part, cannot be doubted ; and well may they raise such triumphant hymn, rehearsing, as it does, the no longer delayed achievements of their glorious Head, to which they shall have borne patient testimony in the days of their pilgrimage. *Salvation*, the fruit, not simply of grace, but of all-prevailing *strength*, subjugating every enemy ; the long promised *kingdom of God*, at length established by *the power of his Christ* ; these consequences of Satan's precipitation from heaven cannot be descried by the saints, as appearing in perspective, without eliciting their burst of adoration. The process of actual redemption having commenced, they rejoice in its consummation.

For the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night.]

This shows us that in the heavenly choir's contemplation of the happy issues of Satan's downfall, its bearing upon a particular party, called their "brethren," is especially regarded. Who these brethren are, is therefore a question which cannot be overlooked by the careful reader.

And here the scene rehearsed in Zechariah iii. may contribute to us some information in reply : "And he shewed me Joshua the High Priest standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan

standing at his right hand to resist him. And the Lord said unto Satan, The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan; even the Lord that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee: is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?" (ver. 1. 2.) Thus the Jewish people, on their return from Babylon, represented by Joshua their High Priest, are the objects of Satan's malevolence, and the place of the accuser is assigned to him—"the right hand." Nor has he been deposed from it since. Accordingly, when the time draweth nigh for their final restoration, we can easily imagine that their great adversary, who has never intermitted his avocation as accuser, will be then employed in it. Hence, we may conclude that the *brethren* in this vision are the Jewish people, to whom the honor of witnessing to God upon the earth, reverts after Gentile failure, when the present dispensation ends in the rapture of the elect. And, no doubt, the seven Churches in Asia, Jewish gatherings as we have seen*—distinct from the other remnants of the nation—who will sustain the full shock of Antichristian malice and persecution, are specially included.

Of these parties, Satan is here contemplated as the accuser, as he is now of the Church, and was of old of God's servant, Job. (ch. i. 6—12.) Oh, how blessed that all who are thus assailed

* See vol. i. pp. 44—46.

have in Christ a still more vigilant advocate ! Withstanding the adversary, however, is not enough for showing forth the Divine resources, and so he must altogether be expelled the heavenly courts, with no alternative to resort to against the objects of his malice, but open violence ; and this, as it is presently added, only for a brief moment. All these considerations seem to suggest the notes of triumph here uttered over the catastrophe of Satan.

Ver. 11. *And they overcame him.*] This is one index to the inclusion amongst “the brethren” just named, of the members of the seven Churches ; especially the martyred portion of them—for these latter are addressed as overcomers—“*to him that overcometh.*” The past tense “*overcame,*” which is here used, merely signifies that the triumph in question is as vividly before the eyes of the celestial choir, as though it were already achieved—the intervening perspective being passed over in their inspired survey of the happy issue.

By the blood of the Lamb.] This signifies their exercise of faith upon the Son of God—that faith having especial respect to His precious blood-shedding—the great means of redemption from sin and all its consequences. Doubtless, there is an allusion in these words to Israel’s deliverance of old from Egyptian bondage, when the sprinkled

blood of the Paschal Lamb averted the stroke of the destroying angel, and opened the way, in righteousness, for acts of Divine power against their enemies. Nor will this typical experience of their forefathers, we can conceive, be recollected by these witnesses for God, without inspiring in their breasts a responsive hope as to the issue of their present trials. They will read therein, not of mere safety awaiting them, but of glorious triumph,—and that from the blood of the Lamb accrues not only salvation, but all the preferments of Messiah's kingdom ; just as it is, eventually, by that precious blood that God will reconcile all things unto Himself, whether they be things on earth or things in heaven. Children of God ! Doth not your eternal and exceeding weight of glory spring from the same source ? How continually then ought you to have it in remembrance—*you*, the especial sample of its virtue ; now, in your rich experience as sons in the Father's house ; and presently to be acknowledged heirs of the glory of the great First-born, Kings and Priests with Him unto God His Father !

And by the word of his testimony.] This is a suitable description for the word of God in general. But more especially for the word of prophecy—according to the definition—"the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." Ch. xix. 10. Even more specifically may this title be given to the book before us ; for, "the testimony of Jesus,"

an expression which occurs herein several times, is resolved (as we have seen in ch. i. 2) into these very visions—“*the things which John saw.*” But whether the enlarged or limited import of this clause be adopted, the truth is equally conveyed, that as the hope of these saints—their “helmet” in the hour of conflict—is derived from the contemplation of the blood of the Lamb, so the written word which testifies to it shall be precious to them; “the sword of the Spirit,” as it is called elsewhere. Ephes. vi. 17.

And they loved not their lives unto the death.] This clearly indicates that the saints in question will be martyrs, sealing their testimony with their blood. And, so we are furnished with another increment of evidence touching their probable identity with them that overcome of the seven Churches, and to whom such animating promises are addressed.

Ver. 12. *Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them.]* The heavens being now rid of the Arch-Fiend and his hosts, the hymn before us calls on them to rejoice, just as at the advent of Christ, a similar call is addressed to creation at large:—“Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad; let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof. Let the field be joyful, and all that is therein; then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice before the Lord: for he cometh, for he

cometh to judge the earth: he shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with his truth." Psalm xcvi. 11—13. But who are they, it may be asked, that "*dwell*" (or tabernacle) in the heavens; for such is the force of the word? Of course, from this description, we may not exclude the myriads of holy angels which throng the courts of the Divine presence. But, as at this time the Lord Jesus is on his way to the earth, and the saints of this and past dispensations, as we have seen from chapter iv., have been raised and translated to meet him, we may rather conclude that they are the parties principally intended, and as they shall be in the cloudy pavilion which will enfold their returning Lord, the position "*tabernacled in heaven*" may well be ascribed to them. Indeed, it may be in order to their occupation of this assigned position, that Satan and his angels, the wicked spirits that now infest the heavens, are cast out—scattered like the shades of darkness before the rising sun.

Woe (or alas!) to the inhabitants of the earth, and of the sea.] Thus, the event which gives joy to the inhabitants of heaven is pregnant with alarm to mankind below,—and it would appear, from the expressions used, that the whole compass of the globe, both its inland and maritime regions, will be exposed to the distressing consequences.

For the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.] Here the cause of alarm to mankind is expressly assigned—even Satan's ejection to the earth, whereto, being deprived of his vantage ground in the heavens, his pernicious agency is henceforth to be limited. And because of his consciousness of the short career that remains to him, (probably only seven years, the last of the seventy hebdomads of Daniel, wherein the Antichrist runs his course,) he will labour to fill up the time with proportionate malice.

Thus, it must be admitted that the great development of Satanic rage on the earth against the cause of Christ is yet to come ; and to meet it will, doubtless, set in that dispensation of the Lord's day, or, day of the Lord, some of whose events we have already considered. Moreover, participation in the dreadful conflict of such crisis awaits not the saints of God now—their blessed hope being to be gathered to Jesus previously. Indeed, it is this event, as we can easily conceive, which, in combination with Satan's desperate malignity, will precipitate the great apostacy of the last days—for, then, the salt of the earth will be removed, and the leaven of evil be comparatively unrestrained. But, still, although the fearful consummation is future, it now casts its shadows before on our times ; and the whole

of our dispensation is, therefore, emphatically called “the evil day,” in reference to which we are exhorted to take unto ourselves “the whole armour of God.” Ephes. vi. 13. And, surely, the signs of the times are sufficiently ominous to put the Church on the alert. The crater of infidelity and revolution has opened, and the lava is overflowing far and wide, out of which any form of evil may be apprehended to evolve. At all events, the principles are working, as, indeed, they have been, from the beginning, wherefrom the ultimate masterpiece of Satan will be composed; and in the light of that masterpiece, which this book discloses, they must be the better discerned.

Let it not be in vain, then, that we are conversant with these things—but, with consciences sprinkled from sin by the precious blood of Christ, let us walk with him in holy obedience and intelligence of his thoughts and ways; realizing that, at what time we know not, he may gather us unto himself. And looking for this blessed hope we shall be ready for all else that may intervene, whether persecution and reproach, the spoiling of all our earthly treasure, or departure from the body. Nothing can disturb him who enters into God’s own rest, Jesus, “the resurrection and the life.”

Ver. 13. *And when the dragon saw that he*

was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man-child.] Here is the explicit recital of whence the persecution of the Jewish people proceeds. It had been implied that the dragon was the author of it by the fact of the woman's flight being recorded in immediate sequence with the description of his devouring posture towards her offspring; but now, the information is added that his ejection from heaven was a preliminary occurrence, as though resentment for this were the proximate incentive to his malice.

Ver. 14. *And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent.]* Thus, the Spirit having resumed his account of Jewish suffering at the hands of Satan, proceeds to rehearse the subject with more precise detail. The supplementary information, now furnished, relates first to the supernatural aid by which the distressed remnant will be helped in their flight. In verse 6, this particular was not mentioned. The figure employed to express it now, suggests that there will be a renewal on the occasion, of the experience of their fathers when they fled from the face of Pharaoh in Egypt—a type of the oppressor in the last days. For, recounting that memorable

event afterwards, by the mouth of Moses, the Lord says to Israel:—"Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself." Exodus xix. 4. The emblem probably denotes that the Exodus from Egypt was accomplished with the celerity and ease proper to the flight of the king of the forest; Jehovah, also, in the pillar of cloud and of fire, like this noble bird in convoying her young, interposing himself between Israel and their pursuers. Thus, then, we may expect it will prove again, in the coming exigency of this same people. With a high hand, and an outstretched arm, will the Lord protect and guide them to the place of their sojourning in the wilderness.

Again: the information here is more precise as to the succour to be enjoyed by these exiles, in their otherwise inhospitable retirement. The woman will be *nourished there from the face of the serpent*. Moreover, the duration of the period in question is now expressed differently from what it is in the former verse. There, it was given in days (1260 days) corresponding with the reckoning of the Witnesses prophesying in Jerusalem, as though to intimate the sympathizing association of both these parties under diverse experience. Here, it is given after the reckoning which occurs in Daniel relative to the oppression

of the Antichrist, (Dan. vii. 25 ; xii. 7,) in order, perhaps, to our identification of the two periods, and to hint that the great patron of such oppression is Satan ; whose denomination is further varied to that of “Serpent,” because of the machinations which he will resort to in the case of this escaped remnant, simultaneously with the open violence that he will practice against their less favoured brethren in the land.

Ver. 15. *And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood, after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood.*] From the name, *serpent*, still continued to Satan, we may conclude that the working here ascribed to him is, in some way, of an insidious character ; and it may consist in this, that it will not be seen to emanate from him, but will be disguised under the agency which he employs. And such agency may be, literally, a flood of water, whereby Satan will seek to inundate the region traversed by the escaped Jewish remnant. But, perhaps, “waters” here are symbolical of hostile levies of men, who shall be excited to pursue the poor fugitives. This supposition derives probability from the undoubted symbolical use of the term elsewhere. For example, in Psalm lxix, we read of “waters coming in” unto the Psalmist’s soul, and of “floods overflowing” him ; and, in the following verse, the allusion is

explained by a reference to the hostility of the wicked:—"They that hate me without a cause are more than the hairs of mine head." Ver. 1—4. See also Psalm lxxxviii. 17. Again, in Psalm cxxiv,—and this, probably, is the very language of the remnant before us, on a review of their deliverance on this precise occasion:—"If it had not been the Lord who was on our side, now may Israel say; If it had not been the Lord who was on our side, when men rose up against us: then they had swallowed us up quick, when their wrath was kindled against us: then the waters had overwhelmed us, the stream had gone over our soul." Ver. 1—4.

Ver. 16. *And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth.*] This shews the means by which deliverance from the foregoing device of Satan will be accomplished. And if we conclude, as it appears from the last inference adduced we ought, that they are not literal waters that are intended, but the pursuing hosts of Antichrist, who receive their persecuting commission from Satan, we can conceive how their destruction may be completed as here described, from the recorded end of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, in regard to whom it is said: "The ground clave asunder that was under them; and

the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up, and their houses, and all the men that appertained unto Korah, and all their goods. They, and all that appertained to them, went down alive into the pit, and the earth closed upon them: and they perished from among the congregation.” Num. xvi. 31—33. Thus, sudden judgment will come upon these Antichristian assailants, and they will go down quick into destruction, reminding the preserved remnant of the experience of their forefathers, when they saw Pharaoh and his armies engulfed in the waters of the Red Sea.

Ver. 17. *And the dragon was wrath with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.*] Thus, the previous description of Satan is resumed. As the *serpent*, he had acted with craft in instigating to the pursuit of the Jewish remnant just recited. Now, upon their escaping his malice, he is exasperated, and proceeds to act with more open violence against those that are still exposed to his power. And such are represented under a two-fold denomination. First, they are the remnant of the woman’s seed, *i. e.* Jews. Secondly, they are believing Jews; for they “keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ,” by which may be denoted the remnant now

enclosed within the captured city; but, principally, the seven Churches in Asia Minor—Jewish disciples, who, scattered into the different cities named, form themselves into worshipping communities after the manner of their fathers. And it is remarkable, that to these parties the prophecies of this book, called the testimony of Jesus Christ, are primarily addressed. Ch. i. 11; xxii. 16. See vol. i. p. 58, 67, 69.

Upon the characteristic feature—“*who keep the commandments of God*”—which has not been yet noticed, the suggestion is offered, that perhaps this relates to the renewed observance of the Mosaic ordinances, which seem enjoined upon the returned Jews in the latter day, in connection with the assured re-appearance amongst them of Elijah the prophet: “Remember ye the law of Moses my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments.” Mal. iv. 4. Let it be added, that for the admission of this suggestion, the reference to the temple-worshippers in Jerusalem,* as also to the synagogue form of assembly attaching to the seven Churches, should serve to prepare the reader. And if the co-existence of all this, as divinely sanctioned, seem incompatible with the status and privileges now occupied by the Church,

* See chapter xi.

the view already contended for, in these pages, of the previous translation of the latter into her place in the heavens, must be called to mind—an event which leaves room for the Divine recurrence to Jewish testimony, as it obtained of old, prior to the disclosure of the present mystery.* Eph. iii. 9.

CHAPTER XIII.

SECTION I.

(Verses 1—10.)

1 And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy.

2 And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as *the feet* of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority.

3 And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast.

4 And they worshipped the dragon which gave power unto the beast: and they worshipped the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him?

5 And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty *and two months*.

6 And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven.

* See Introductory Essay. Apocalyptic Interpretation, pp 49, 50.

7 And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations.

8 And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

9 If any man have an ear, let him hear.

10 He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity: he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.

It is very important, in entering upon the consideration of this chapter, to discern the precise period to which its events belong. To this end, we must bear in mind the information of chap. xii., that, after Satan's ejection from heaven, the crisis of his persecution of the Jewish people begins. At this point, then, the subject seems taken up, in the visions that follow, to rehearse the particulars of that terrible agency which shall be put in requisition on the occasion, even the Antichrist of the last days, whose impious career forms the subject of allusion in so many of the prophecies.

And here it may be well to notice the parallelism, as to order of events, between the Spirit's recital in this place and in the second epistle to the Thessalonians. In the latter, after speaking of the same party, the Antichrist, and depicting his blasphemous character, the Apostle significantly adds, as though reverting to what he had before communicated, "And now ye know what with-

holdeth" (or letteth) "that he" (*i. e.* the Antichrist) "might be revealed in his time." He repeats the matter, however, in the very next clause:—"For the mystery of iniquity doth already work." (2 Thess. ii. 6, 7.) Thus, an operating cause is assigned for the hitherto suspended appearance of this monster of iniquity, wherein the *neuter* gender is used. But there is a personal agent at work, as well, who plies this mystery of iniquity, and so it follows:—"Only *he* who now letteth" (or withholdeth, for it is the same word that is employed) "will let," (or, withhold) "until he be taken out of the way." He, accordingly, who has to do with the working of the mystery of iniquity—that is, we cannot doubt, Satan, against whose wiles the saints have now to wrestle—is manifestly the one who, in some way or other, stays the appearance of the Antichrist; and as his object herein may be to economize his resources, and reserve, as long as possible, the last arrow in his quiver—so his ejection from the heavens may be the event which will precipitate measures, and terminate all reserve. And it is worthy of remark that the phrase "until he be taken *out of the way*," is, literally, until he be taken '*out of the midst*,' as though to refer to the successful issue of the war which Michael wages against him. The sequel, moreover, in both recitals, equally corresponds. For "then," says

the Apostle, “shall that wicked be revealed,” (*i. e.* the Antichrist); and similarly succeeds the vision before us, in the Apocalypse:—“*And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy.*” So much for the connexion between this chapter and the subject of the preceding.

We now proceed with the details of interpretation.

Ver. 1. *And I stood.*] According to the most improved version of the original text, this clause runs thus:—“*And he stood,*” that is, the Dragon. And this is more consistent with the context, as intimating that the evoking of the Antichrist, the event which immediately follows, is the work of Satan, now addressing himself to the organization of his desperate rebellion against the great coming deliverer.

Upon the sand of the sea.] That the sea here means the Mediterranean, is an interpretation commended to us by what follows. From the countries washed by its waters, the Antichrist and his empire will take their rise. And so, on the sand, or shore thereof, Satan, the deviser of the evil, may be well said to take up his position, as he summons his ordained ally to his service.

And I saw a beast rise up out of the sea.] Such is the spectacle presented to the Apostle, as though the response to Satan's summons. The Antichrist, in whom the universal empire of the latter day will at length attain to unity, now emerges, as a huge monster, from the deep.

Having seven heads and ten horns.] As observed, in the exposition of chap. xii., this description,—corresponding in its features to that of the dragon, and, doubtless, showing that here is his future representative on earth,—sums up the distribution, as to heads and horns, of the four beasts in Dan. vii. (See vol. ii., p. 191.) It is observable, also, that these latter monsters, in like manner, emerge from the Mediterranean or “Great Sea,” as the result of the striving, upon it, of the four winds of heaven.

From these coincidences, it seems manifest that the powers thus symbolized in the vision of the Prophet, whatever allusion popular commentators may find in them to past empires, are to act their part in a crisis still future: and what confirms this view is the fact, that, at the Lord's coming in judgment, they are found contemporaneously in existence, and the effects of that judgment upon them, respectively, are assigned by the Prophet:—“I beheld even till the beast was slain, and his body destroyed, and given to the burning flame. As concerning the rest of the

beasts, they had their dominion taken away: yet their lives were prolonged for a season and time." Dan. vii. 11, 12. Without going further into this subject at present, as it must again come under discussion in a subsequent chapter, let it suffice to add, that a like reference to the future, seems to belong to Nebuchadnezzar's vision of the image, in the second chapter of the same Prophet. For, when the stone smites it upon its feet—the symbol of the fourth empire in its divided state—"then," we read, "was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing-floor;"—that is, the other kingdoms are involved in destruction. Thus it is implied that, in some way or other, they are reputed to have an existence at the time in question; and the unity of the image, taking it as a whole, would seem to require a recognition of this.

And upon his horns ten crowns.] In the description of the dragon, the symbol of Satan, in chap. xii., we observed the crowns were "upon his seven heads," signifying, as was remarked, his complete dominion, as God of this world. Now that his great ordinance, the Antichrist, appears upon the stage, the distribution of crowns is in proportion to his ten symbolic horns, all which are invested with this distinction. For,

he (the Antichrist) will have ten kings under him, who, that they may act their part, will “receive power,” as it is said, elsewhere, “for one hour with the Beast,” their imperial master. Chap. xvii. 12.

And upon his heads the name of blasphemy.] The heads of the beast seem to set forth the unity which the person of the Antichrist will give to a line of kings with which he will be connected. And here we learn that one characteristic, which will be prominently summed up in him, is *blasphemy*. The details of this we shall meet with as we proceed.

Ver. 2. *And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion.]* This is a summary combination of the description of the three beasts in Dan. vii. already referred to:—“The first was like a lion.... a second, like to a bear.... After this I beheld, and lo another, like a leopard.” The fourth beast, in the series, it will be remembered, yields the one head and ten horns, which are supplementary to the filling up all the details of the one symbolic beast before us.* Nor should this setting forth of the dreadful oppressor of the last days find us unprepared for his special aspect towards the Jewish people, as the divinely ordained

* Daniel vii.

scourge to chastise them for their career of national apostacy. For, in the Prophet Hosea, after a recapitulation of their grievous offences, Jehovah thus threatens:—"Therefore I will be unto them as a *lion*: as a *leopard* by the way will I observe them: I will meet them as a *bear* that is bereaved of her whelps . . . there will I devour them like a *lion*:"* and, as the emphatic import of all these comparisons, it is added, as though pointing to Daniel and the Apocalypse, "The wild beast shall tear them." See vol. i., p. 124.

And the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority.] This clearly exhibits the Antichrist as holding his universal empire of Satan. And so says St. Paul:—"whose coming is after the working of Satan, with all power, and signs, and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish. (2 Thess. ii. 9, 10.) The design of getting himself thus represented in the person of a man, in whom he can energize, and so mimic the great mystery of godliness—"God manifest in the flesh"—has ever been entertained by Satan.

And of this, he gave significant intimation in his temptation of our blessed Lord, when showing him all the kingdoms of the world,

* Hosea xiii. 7. 8.

he said:—"All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it. If thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be thine." (Luke iv. 6, 7.) Thus did Satan disclose his secret, which he will yet practically carry out, of transferring earth's empire to the sway of some human vassal who will acknowledge him as his liege lord, and do him homage accordingly. Our Lord, indeed, spurned the proposal with holy indignation, saying, "Get thee behind me, Satan." But, as we are here informed, the time is at hand, when Satan will succeed in getting the fit instrument for which he has been looking; and working mightily in this "*man of the earth*,"* the "*man of sin*,"† as he is elsewhere called, will he wrestle to retain his usurped dominion against the seed of the woman, the great Redeemer, who is hastening to the rescue.

In regard to the term, "seat," used in this clause, it is, literally, *throne*, the same word which occurs in the second chapter, where the angel of the church of Pergamos is addressed:—"I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat (*throne*) is; See also chap. xvi. 10., and vol. i., p. 120—126.

Ver. 3. *And I saw one of his heads, as it were*

* Psalm x. 18. + 2 Thess. ii. 3.

wounded to death, and his deadly wound was healed.] This expression—"as it were wounded to death," obviously suggests to the mind what is said in chap. v. 6, of our blessed Lord being seen in heaven "*as a Lamb that had been slain*," that is, with the marks of His sacrificial death upon His person. Similar, then, we may presume the meaning to be touching the aspect of the Beast. He exhibits tokens of his having been put to death. And here it is indispensable to anticipate, in some measure, the information given us in chap. xvii. ; for it is to the same events, there detailed, that allusion is now made. The spectacle of the woman (the city of Babylon, yet to be revived) sitting upon the Beast (the Antichrist), having been shown, in vision, to the Apostle, so that he wondered with great admiration,—the revealing angel says to him, "the beast that thou sawest was and is not ; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition." Here is a statement which plainly answers to the clause before us, concerning the Beast being wounded to death as to one of his heads, and yet his wound becoming healed. In fact, a resurrection existence of this monstrous power is clearly predicted. But after the preface to arrest attention—"here is the mind which hath wisdom,"—the matter is still more explicitly resumed in the following verse : "The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the

woman sitteth. And there are seven kings : five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come ; and when he cometh, he must continue a short space. And the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition." Ver. 9—11. Here, it is submitted, generally, without aiming at the full interpretation which will come in due course, we have a double import assigned to the seven heads of the Beast. In relation to the woman, *i. e.* the city Babylon, they are comparable to seven mountains, whereupon, as on a broad foundation, she hath her seat ; but they are properly seven kings, through whose energy of rule over the Antichristian empire, Babylon everywhere exerts her paramount influence. These kings, it appears, are not indeed contemporaneous ; and their being corporately set forth in the symbol, which, at first sight, seems to give them this aspect, may be merely to represent that, by their resources, severally, the huge empire in question has been consolidated. At the precise time, in the day of the Lord, which the explanation given to John contemplates, five of these kings shall have fallen ; the sixth will be reigning ;* and the seventh, the completer of the organization of the empire, is about to succeed, but only for a *short space*, when he eventually reappears as the

* No doubt, the book of Daniel, if patiently and prayerfully studied, will further unfold this crisis to us. See ch. vii. viii. xi.

eighth,—though still only the final complement of the seven,—heading up, in his person, the vitality, as it were, of those who have preceded him. Thus, the empire being identified with its head, he will be the Beast that was, and is not, and yet is, (ver. 8). In other words, in him, the Beast having had one of his heads wounded to death, will, in his resurrection, have his deadly wound healed; and then, especially, will he be the executive of Satan, as described in the vision under consideration.

As to the difference of origin assigned to this power,—the designation being in chap. xiii. the Beast “from the sea;” and in chap. xvii. the Beast that “is to ascend from the bottomless pit,”—this is at once accounted for by the foregoing fact of his having two advents, mention being made more expressly of the *first* in his summary history, (chap. xiii.); and of the second, *i. e.* his ascent from Hades, or the bottomless pit,* in chap. xvii.

That the Antichrist should thus be presented as triumphing over death, however startling, ought not to surprise us, when we recognise Satan’s design in him, to mimic the true Messiah—the first-born from the dead, the Prince of the kings of the earth,—as also to pander to the infidel thought of the ungodly, (rising even now), that by some development of humanity and of the

* See vol. ii. pp 52—54.

resources of nature around them, they may, at length, evade the stern decree of dissolution, under which every preceding generation of their fellows has descended to the grave. Of course, such an event as the resurrection of the Antichrist—the vaunting champion, as we can conceive him to be, of human perfectibility,—will act as a conductor to the latent element of atheism, with which the mass of society shall then be charged; and, in the wide-spread issue, great must be the triumph of the Author of evil. At all events, let not the reader consider that the interpretation here propounded on this point is confined to the Author. It is also to be found substantially in a recent work on Prophecy, published in this country, called “The Retrospect;” and in the year 1806, it had appeared, accompanied by no little argumentation, in an exposition of the Prophecies, by a French writer, who expresses himself as follows:—“St. John seems, in fact, to say, that the Antichrist will be first put to death, and that he will rise again to consummate his work. ‘The beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven’—it appears necessary, for preserving the natural sense and full meaning of this text, to admit that the beast, who is one of the seven kings, after having lived as an ordinary man, and reigned some time without making himself known, will disappear from amongst men by

death, and will then return to occupy anew the throne on which he was before seated, and consummate the mystery of iniquity which belongs to him ; that is to say, in a word, that the Antichrist, who is this Beast, will die and will rise again. It is impossible that the same individual should be both one of the seven kings who precede the eighth, and the eighth himself, who follows the seven preceding ones, unless he becomes twice king, and reigns at two different epochs : the very thing that will befall the Antichrist.”* The above extracts may interest the reader, shewing that even with the servile tendency to traditionary glosses of a Romish mind, the truth, on this subject, was too plain to be resisted.

** And all the world wondered after the beast.]* Such will be the effect on mankind of their beholding the Antichrist, in the supremacy of his power, after having passed through death. Crowds will everywhere attend his steps, and reverberate his fame. In him they will consider a new epoch in the history of man has arrived ; and that, at length, the evil of the past in which the race has

* Translated from “ *Exposition des Prédications et des Promesses faites à l'Eglise.*”—PAR LE P. LAMBERT. Coming from such a source, the whole work is a most remarkable publication. The discernment of the Author, in regard to prophetic truth, is a reproach to many of our Protestant Divines,

so long prevailed, has, by the improvement of experience, given birth to imperishable good ; that henceforth an immortal existence is within their reach, for that the harbinger of it has appeared. Nor shall the Jewish people, in their land, escape his influence ; for there, it appears, will he display himself in all his glory to attract their carnal hearts ; so that what was not true, in the language of the Pharisees, of the blessed Jesus—"Behold, the world is gone after him," John xii. 19—shall be judicially fulfilled in this His impious rival.

Ver. 4. *And they worshipped the dragon which gave power unto the beast.*] Thus, as through Christ, the invisible Father is the object of adoration to the believer ; so through his emissary the Antichrist, Satan will be worshipped by the deluded world. He will thus seek, by awful mimicry, to anticipate the Divine purpose in the manifestation of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

And they worshipped the beast, saying, who is like unto the beast ? who is able to make war with him ?] Thus, the Antichrist will also attract homage to himself, being at one and the same time, in imitation of the Christ of God—the worshipped, and the head of the worshippers. Indeed, in deifying him, mankind will be also deifying themselves. For he will be the impersonating unity of all that they will then esteem,—intellectual

development, worldly possessions, commercial fame, insatiable ambition, martial prowess. See Isaiah xiv. ; Job xli. ; Hab. ii. Hence, their very self-complacency will make them boast themselves of him. Accordingly, they challenge with disdain the onset of any foe against him :—“ *Who is able to make war with him ?* ”—words which seem designed as a parody upon the homage rendered to Jehovah by Israel of old, when they sang over the destruction of Pharaoh and his hosts :—“ The Lord is a man of war : the Lord is his name. . . . Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the gods ? who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders ? ” Exodus xv. 3, 11. And here, again, we are reminded that among the apostate worshippers of the Antichrist, Jewish votaries will not be wanting to offer him the very incense that Jehovah has appropriated to himself.

Ver. 5. *And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things.*] This serves to identify the enemy, here described, with the little horn of Daniel’s fourth beast :—“ I considered,” he says, “ the horns, and, behold, there came up among them another little horn, before whom there were three of the first horns plucked up by the roots : and, behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of man, and *a mouth speaking great things.* ” Dan. vii. 8. What these great things will

be, we can imagine from the arrogant boastings of Sennacherib, of old, one of the types of this final enemy, recounting his achievements, and reproaching Israel with the impotence of their God to resist his invading progress.*

And blasphemies.] This is, doubtless, but another expression for “speaking great words against the Most High,” which Daniel predicates of the fourth beast just alluded to.

Again: the same feature is expanded in the account of the wilful king in chap. xi., indicating, moreover, that he is a *third* portraiture of the party before us:—“And the king shall do according to his will; and he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvellous things against the God of gods.” Dan. xi. 36. This answers, also, to the prophecy concerning the man of sin, in the epistle to the Thessalonians, of whom it is said, that “he opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.” 2 Thess. ii. 4. We cannot doubt that it is the same blaspheming party who is contemplated.

And power was given unto him to continue forty and two months.] Such is to be the duration of the Antichrist’s open tyranny and persecution,

* Isaiah xxxvi.

after having, with his hosts, captured Jerusalem. (See chap. xi.) It is the same period that is referred to in Daniel, where we read that “he shall speak great words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High, (the Jewish people), and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time, and times, and the dividing of time.” Dan. vii. 25. As already observed, this period also runs parallel with that of the prophesying of the two witnesses; and appears to be the latter half of Daniel’s week, or hebdomad; during which, for some provocation or other, having broken his covenant with the deluded Jews, he throws off the mask, and becomes their ruthless oppressor. At the expiration of this assigned time, we may conclude that the seven vials of retributive wrath are poured out upon him and his confederates, to be succeeded by the epiphany or manifestation of the Divine presence, in order to his destruction. See 2 Thess. ii. 8.

Ver. 6. *And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven.*] Thus, he fails not to act according to the endowment ascribed to him in the preceding verse—“*a mouth speaking blasphemies.*” But here are further specified the objects of his blasphemies;—first, *the name of God*, that is,

the Divine character; secondly, *his tabernacle*; doubtless, the cloudy pavilion in the heavens, where-from, we may imagine, occasional signs will be given, as from the pillar of cloud of old, of the Lord's coming judgments against this wicked one;—thirdly, *them that dwell, or tabernacle, therein*; that is, Christ and his glorified saints, as they are presented to us in chap. iv.

Ver. 7. *And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them.*] This harmonizes with the titles given to the Antichrist elsewhere—THE ENEMY AND AVENGER.* As such he will be used of God, to scourge the apostate Jewish nation. But a righteous remnant maintaining a faithful testimony amidst his usurpation will also suffer, and it is to these the denomination of *saints* belongs. One class of them will be composed, as we have seen, of the seven Churches of Asia; and another will consist of the band of true worshippers in Jerusalem, at the head of whom will be the two witnesses, whom the Antichrist finally overcomes. But, as already noticed, real victory will belong to them, like as unto the blessed Jesus himself, who, through death, destroyed him that had the power of death;† and so they are addressed and celebrated

* Psalm viii. 2; xlv. 16.

† Heb. ii. 14.

beforehand as *overcoming*.^{*} This persecuting career of the Antichrist is obviously identical with what is said of the little horn of Daniel's fourth beast:—"The same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them." Dan. vii. 21.

And power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations.] Here is a note of that universal empire, of which the Antichrist will be possessed throughout the earth; the antitype, in this respect, of Nebuchadnezzar of old, (see Dan. iii. 7, &c.); and by its resources he will be supported, we can imagine, in the persecution of the saints referred to in the previous clause. But, amidst it all, they will doubtless feel comfort in the recognition of the fact (as did our Lord of old, in the case of Pilate) that their oppressor could have no power against them, except it were given him from above.[†]

Ver. 8. *And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him.*] As the preceding verse ascribes to the Antichrist an universal lordship over "all kindreds, tongues, and nations," it is reasonable to interpret similarly this universality of worship which is to be rendered to him. All mankind, with the exception that immediately follows, will do him homage; though, of course, the inhabitants

^{*} Ch. ii. 7, 11, 17, 26; iii. 5, 12, 21; xii. 11. [†] John xix. 11.

of the land (Palestine) may be especially included as being the scene of the tyrant's most blasphemous usurpation—sitting in the temple of God, and showing himself that he is God. 2 Thess. ii. 4. And it is observable, that it is in connexion with this, the Spirit proceeds in the Epistle to the Thessalonians, to describe the abandonment of men to strong delusion that they should believe a lie—the lie being, doubtless, the impious pretensions of the arch-deceiver.

Whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.] The words, “from the foundation of the world,” should be read in connexion with the verb “*written*.” The construction of the original requires this. And, comparing herewith Matt. xxv. 34, it seems that this form of date is usually associated with the Divine purpose towards *mankind at large*, as though following in order the working of Godhead within itself in the setting up of THE CHRIST, and the choosing of the Church in Him: for the period to which these latter events are ascribed is given thus—“*before the foundation of the world*.” (See John xvii. 5, 24; Ephes. i. 4.) Sovereign grace, however, is characterized by the use of both dates; and from it accordingly originates, as in the case before us, the reserve of any of the inhabitants of the earth from the delusions of the Antichrist.

They are recognized by God as objects of his love from of old, as though recorded in a book before him; and hence they are saved from that enormous act of blasphemy which will cause the Divine wrath to burn for ever against the apostates.

On the expression “the book of life,” see on ch. iii. 5. That it is here called “the book of life *of the Lamb*,” intimates that God’s preserving mercy (as indeed all blessings) is the fruit of the atoning blood.

Ver. 9. *If any man have an ear, let him hear.*] This oracular note may be taken in connexion with what precedes or follows. See on ch. ii. 7.

Ver. 10. *He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity : he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword.*] This would seem to intimate that the persecuting power will eventually undergo a retribution of like kind with the cruelty practised by itself. But this is scarcely congruous with the following clause, which represents the patience and faith of the saints as being hereby exercised. It is submitted, then, that in accordance with a recent edition of the original text,* the passage should run thus:—‘If any one leadeth into captivity, into captivity he (the

* Εἰ τις αἰχμαλωσίαν συνάγει, εἰς αἰχμαλωσίαν ὑπάγει· εἰ τις ἐν μαχαίρα ἀποκτενεῖ, δεῖ αὐτὸν ἐν μαχαίρᾳ ἀποκταῖσθαι. Novum Testamentum Græce ad fidem codicis principis Vaticani. Edidit *Edwardus De Muralto*. *Hamburgi*, 1846.

oppressed) goes ; if any one will kill with the sword, with the sword must he (the oppressed) be killed ;' and so, the import of the verse is to affirm the inevitableness, for the appointed time, of the oppressor's tyranny. According to his caprice, some will be numbered to captivity, and others to the sword. The period in question is, no doubt, the same that is referred to in the Prophet Zechariah, where, after the rehearsal of the cutting off of two-thirds of the inhabitants of the land at large (Palestine), it is added : " And half of the city shall go forth into captivity." Zech. xiii. 8 ; xiv. 2.

The forty-fourth Psalm, also, it is likely, points to the same crisis :—" For thy sake are we killed all the day long ; we are counted as sheep for the slaughter." Psalm xlv. 22.

Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.] That is, the afore-named suffering will be the occasion for the exercise of these graces ; and this should suggest to us, as already noticed, that the *seven Churches*, mentioned in the beginning of this book, belong to this future time ; for all the Epistles addressed to them imply the endurance of the same sort of persecution, and these very graces, patience and faith, are recognized with emphatic approbation by the Lord Jesus. See vol. 1, pages 72, 73.

Children of God ! Such is a summary of the

development of evil in the latter days, or, “day of the Lord” And may we not regard it as at hand? For, what should we so naturally expect to precede the establishment, in the earth, of the Beast’s despotic reign, as the career of revolution and anarchy which is even now spreading itself among the nations—the acceptance of an absolute tyrant being the only resource left to mankind amidst the exhaustion of democratic selfishness.

How watchful and alert, then, ought we to be in regard to our blessed hope—translation to meet our coming Lord—the initiating event which will precipitate the course of every other! Let us remember Abraham communed with God in prayer, whilst destruction was impending over the guilty Sodom; and the character of Enoch, in connexion with his glorious distinction amongst men—type as he was of the church of God—is thus given:—“Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him.” Gen. v. 24. Oh! that the Christian reader may drink into this spirit—the same, also, that actuates our Lord himself; for of Him it is written, that, at the Father’s right hand, He sits “*expecting* ;” and, herein, the longing of every departed saint is equally represented.

How long, O Lord, how long? even in heav’n
Sounds this plaintive cry from spirits forgiv’n :
Jesus, they would have more, even in bliss,
E’en there, expectant, wait more happiness.

They wait even in heav'n impatiently
To see this troubled world at peace with Thee ;
Their eyes would see earth's King, once crucified,
At length acknowledged, lov'd, and glorified.

Jesus ! they would behold thy work complete,
And misery and sin beneath thy feet ;
And may not we, too, join in heaven's song ?
Should we alone not ask, " How long ? how long ? "

CHAPTER XIII.

SECTION SECOND.

Verses 11—18.

11 And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth ;
and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon.

12 And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him,
and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship
the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed.

13 And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come
down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men.

14 And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by *the means of*
those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast ;
saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an
image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live.

15 And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast,
that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as
many as would not worship the image of the beast should be
killed.

16 And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads :

17 And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.

18 Here is wisdom, Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is six hundred threescore *and* six.

WE have seen, in the previous chapter, how the dragon when cast out of heaven, and limited to the earth, seeks to make the most of the short time allotted to him, and goes forth to destroy and exterminate the Jews. The instrument, also, that he will use for that purpose—the Antichrist of the last days—has been described in the former section of this chapter. Now is revealed another and subordinate agent, who, with the Antichrist and Satan, will constitute an awful mimicry of the Divine Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

Ver. 11. *And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth.*] The term translated *earth* here, seems to be put in contrast with the *sea* in ver. 1, whence the first Beast emerges. And, as we concluded that the latter referred to the countries bordering on the Mediterranean, the reader may be disposed to regard the former (the earth) as signifying some inland territory, which is to yield forth the second agent of evil. Hence, also, it may appear that the Roman Pontiff, with his wide-spread influence over the European continent,

is the party represented ; nor, as the Arch-leader of apostacy for so many centuries, is there any improbability, but the reverse, that such may be the final part which he will come to act. At the beginning of the present revolutionary crisis, we know how this great Ecclesiastic endeavoured to ride on the storm and rule the whirlwind ; and how in the neighbouring kingdom of France, in order to retain their position, the Romish priesthood lent themselves to the insensate freaks of an excited populace, by celebrating with Masses their successful insurrection, and blessing its emblems—the trees of liberty. When, therefore, the Mighty Conqueror of the last days, at the head of an universal empire, fills the world with the prestige of his fame ; and when utter apostacy from even the profession of Christianity prevails amongst mankind ; the espousal of His cause may be but another device of the Papal usurper, wherewith to maintain his own ascendancy.

But whilst it is quite right, with such an artful and corrupt power before us as the ecclesiastical despot of Rome presents, to look in this direction for the obsequious agent of the future Antichrist ; yet, possibly, the origin ascribed to him *out of the earth* may mean the Jewish land ; and so he may be the chief of those false prophets which are spoken of elsewhere, as being to ply their work amongst the returned Jews. See Matt. xxiv. 24.

And he had two horns like a lamb.] Thus as the first Beast, the Antichrist, has the aspect of destructiveness about him whereby to intimidate, his agent wears the aspect of conciliation; so that, between the two, every diversity of human constitution will be appealed to, in order to attract adherents to their diabolical cause. On the one hand, it will appear dangerous to resist; on the other, plausible to yield. It may be that this second agent will commend himself as a minister of peace, by his own quiet subjection to his Antichristian superior.

And he spake as a dragon.] Thus his real nature will shew itself. Withal that his appearance is so different; fierceness and rage will really belong to him, and will exhibit themselves in his enunciations, as occasion occurs. When our blessed Lord spoke of “wolves in sheeps’ clothing” as the similitude of false teachers, He, doubtless, had in view this satellite of the wicked one. See Matt. vii. 15. And, perhaps, it is because of the character of this agent of the Antichrist, as well as his own treachery, that the latter is spoken of as he is in Psalm lv. 2:—“The words of his mouth were smoother than butter, but war was in his heart: his words were softer than oil, yet were they drawn swords.”

Ver. 12. *And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him.]* This feature of the

description seems to be taken from the scene presented at the appearances of the Antichrist in public; and probably Jerusalem is the place implied, as it is there, in the temple of God, he is to be formally enthroned as an object of worship. On such occasions, we can easily conceive, that this his prime minister, as here stated, will accompany him; sounding his fame, and acting ostentatiously as the organ of his power. The words “before him,” signify that he acts in the presence of his superior; but still, he may also precede him, in the various processions which may be formed.

And causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast whose deadly wound was healed.] Although the dominion and influence of the Antichrist will prevail throughout the world, yet, as the description before us (as already observed) seems to relate to some public display of blasphemous arrogance amongst the Jews, it is submitted that the word *earth* should be read *land*; and, as in other places, the original is equivocal, so as to admit this translation.

Thus, then, the above clause represents the object at which the False Prophet aims on the occasion of the Antichrist showing himself to the inhabitants of Palestine. Assembled, as we can imagine them to be, in the holy city, as

though to witness some great festival, it may be, an imposing visitation of the sanctuary by the Antichrist, mimicking and eclipsing that of the meek and lowly Jesus of old—they will be deluded, under this False Prophet's influence, into worshipping the Impostor. And it would seem that the fact of his having risen from the dead is that which will be regarded as emblazoning forth his pretensions to this homage; the false prophet, in his magnifying of him, no doubt relying especially on this supernatural event. See on ver. 3.

Ver. 13. *And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men.*] Thus, this ally of the Antichrist will also perform miracles; and of these one sort is specified,—“making fire come down from heaven.” This instrumentality being employed by God, on former occasions, in order to the infliction of judgment,—as in the case of Elijah's dealing with the captains sent to apprehend him*—and our Lord's disciples being ready to evoke it for the same purpose upon the inhospitable Samaritans,† may indicate that it is with a like design to punish the refractory, that this False Prophet here resorts to it. And we know from the history of Job, that, amongst the other mischiefs which befell this saint of God,

* 2 Kings i. 10—12.

+ Luke ix. 54.

fire from heaven was used by Satan, for the destruction of his servants and flocks.* But it is also to be recollected, that fire from heaven came of old for another object, even to consume the sacrifices which were acceptable to God, (see 1 Kings xviii. 38, &c.); and so it may be, that, amidst the profane demonstrations of joy at this time, sacrifices being offered to the Antichrist, (just as was the impulse on the part of the multitude, when they would deify Paul and Barnabas,) such sacrifices will be thus adver-
tized as righteously directed. Or, again, as no object for this miracle is defined by the Spirit, it may be that it will be wrought for the sake of producing blind wonder and devotion, on the part of the multitude, unlike the economy which obtains in the Divine administration. On this point the reader himself is left to discriminate.

Ver. 14. *And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth (land) by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast.]*

Whatever we may consider to be the purport of the miracle just specified, it is here implied that various others will be wrought. Nor is it forbidden that we should recognise some of these as wearing a philanthropic aspect. A remarkable passage indicative of this trait of character, apparently, at least, attaching to the Antichrist, is found in the figurative delineation of him,

* Job i. 16.

furnished in the Book of Job,—under the description of *Leviathan*, or, as he is called in the close of the chapter, “A KING OVER ALL THE CHILDREN OF PRIDE,”—wherein we read, “*Sorrow is turned into joy before him.*” Job xli. 22. Hence, also, we may conceive of the *deception* under which the occupants of *the land* will be seduced into the idolatrous veneration of this daring usurper. As the Apostle says, “Whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders. And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.”*

Hereupon, it may be useful to observe, that miracles, by themselves, are not the standard whereby to test Divine truth; but they do test the real state of the heart. For, if the heart be in unison with God, it will hail the token of truth that is from above, and will revolt from that of the lie, however imposing, which comes from beneath. In fact, to the child of God a miracle in itself is only an index to the supernatural; but whether that supernatural is from God or Satan, is discriminated by the

* 2 Thess. ii. 9—12.

subject-matter with which it is associated. And to this end, God allows not the seal of the supernatural to be affixed to *the truth* except by himself; just as of old he allowed not the utterance of wicked spirits, by the organs of men, to testify to His dear Son as come in the flesh. Such was the theme of those only who spoke in the power of the Holy Ghost. See 1 Cor. xii. 3; 1 John iv. 1—6. Thus, to be established in the knowledge of the truth, is what will prove the preservative of God's witnesses, in the coming day of trial, from the influence of lying wonders; as it is the same now which is to keep the saints from being beguiled by another gospel, no matter how imposingly promulgated, according to the Apostle's words:—"Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." Gal. i. 8. For, of course, if not conversant with the truth, we cannot confront with it the enemy's counterfeit. Nor is it merely the *knowledge* of the truth,—the *love* of it, yea, of the God of truth himself,—is necessary to safety in the crisis contemplated; so that imposture embraced is the proof with God of a hollow heart. To this effect we read in the 13th chapter of Deuteronomy:—"If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder, and the sign or the wonder

come to pass, whereof he spake unto thee, saying, Let us go after other gods, which thou hast not known, and let us serve them; thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams; for the Lord your God proveth you, to know whether ye love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul." Thus, those who truly love God will not be the prey to delusion, but all others shall inevitably be snared and taken.

Saying to them that dwell on the earth, (land) that they should make an image to the beast.] Such is the idolatrous adulation to which the inhabitants of Palestine shall be instigated, (and it seems successfully,) by the False Prophet, that they will fabricate an image of the Antichrist to which worship shall be rendered, as to the Antichrist himself. That he should receive worship personally, however glorifying, might be inconvenient, we can conceive, to this Wicked one, and thus the alternative will commend itself to his votaries, to have him *represented*. And whereas sometimes tyrants of old have resorted for a similar purpose to any indifferent emblem; in this case, the exhibition of his *image* will be determined on. Perhaps, it is this very image, or the multiplied models of it that will come into popular use, (like the bust of Napoleon in the present day,) whose fabrication is made the subject of the Prophet's withering exposure in the Old

Testament; where—after describing the different workmen employed, and their laborious process, together with the ignoble application of the same perishing material to the purposes of personal warmth, and even culinary uses—he thus sums up the whole conduct of the degraded devotee:—“The residue thereof he maketh a god, even his graven image: he falleth down unto it, and worshippeth it, and prayeth unto it, and saith, Deliver me, for thou art my god,”—to which is added, as in the account of the strong delusion portrayed by the Apostle,*—“they have not known nor understood; for he hath shut their eyes, that they cannot see; and their hearts, that they cannot understand. . . . He feedeth on ashes: a deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand?” Isaiah xlv. 17—20. Moreover, what is farther observable is, that the whole subject is connected with the final restoration of the Jews. See ver. 21, 23, 26.

An allusion, it would appear, to the same future crisis of fearful apostacy is made in chap. xli. of this Prophecy, where the recital of the process of idol fabrication forms, at least, part of a transaction which agitates the whole world with strange dread, for it is thus introduced:—“The isles saw it, and feared; the ends of the earth were

* 2 Thess. ii. 2.

afraid, drew near, and came.” Isaiah xli. 5. May not this mean the congress of all nations at Jerusalem, and then their mysterious emotions of awe, as they contemplate their Leader, the Antichrist, risen from the dead, and the formal procedure of the False Prophet to deify him in the Temple, the very presence chamber, as it were, of the glorious Jehovah? Then comes the recital of, apparently, the scene now before us, the making of the Beast’s image:—“ They helped every one his neighbour, and every one said to his brother, Be of good courage. So the carpenter encouraged the goldsmith, and he that smootheth with the hammer him that smote the anvil, saying, It is ready for the soldering: and he fastened it with nails, that it should not be moved.” Ver. 6, 7.

And, now, that to elucidate this subject, we have been led to Old Testament references, we surely cannot overlook the history of Nebuchadnezzar’s image in the Prophet Daniel. From the position of this history, in the sacred narrative—coming in, as it does, after the mention of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream, in the second chapter, wherein, according to Daniel’s interpretation, was shown to the proud monarch, by an image, the degeneracy and ultimate extinction, notwithstanding every energy it might put forth, of his ungodly kingdom—we may reasonably suppose, that, intimidated into

submission, at first, to the Divine decree, his unmortified ambition presently reviving, was resentfully showed against his former weakness, by the image he erected of himself, *entirely of gold*, as though to say his dominion should not become deteriorated by any lapse of time. Thus, then, this image, which all, moreover, were commanded to worship on pain of death, may naturally be regarded as typical of the image of him, in whom, as we have seen, the empires, headed up in Nebuchadnezzar, are yet to attain a final organization, preparatory to their demolition by the coming of the Son of man. Hence, the ordeal which God's servants—for example, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego—went through of old, may be recorded not only as history, but as a rehearsal of what the witnesses against Antichrist shall have to withstand when the False Prophet causes his image to be made.

Which had the wound by a sword, and did live.] Here, again, allusion is made to the Antichrist, as having revived out of death. But—what had not been mentioned before, namely, that he had received his fatal wound *by the sword*—is now incidentally supplied. Doubtless, in some of the battles predicted in the 11th chap. of Daniel, he will fall under the hand of some belligerent rival—and such event, being notorious, will give the greater éclat to his resurrection,

Ver. 15. *And he had power to give life (breath) unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak.*] Human art and ingenuity have accomplished marvellous things, so that from the artificial bird have issued the sweetest notes of the living songster; and by mechanical contrivance, on the same principle, the automaton has been brought to execute not only the movements, but the vocal utterances of the human being. But here is more than the effect of the most exquisite art. By the power of the False Prophet, of course imparted by Satan, the statue of the Antichrist becomes endowed with vitality and speech. Nor is this prodigy altogether without recognition in the Old Testament. The Prophet Habakkuk seems to have in view, at least the *process* of its working, when he exclaims,—“Woe unto him that saith to the wood, Awake; to the dumb stone, Arise, it shall teach! Behold, it is laid over with gold and silver, and there is no breath at all in the midst of it.” Hab. ii. 19. The Prophet may be regarded, in the last clause, not as contemplating the ultimate vanity of the idolatrous design, but as aggravating its enormity;—as though he had said they seek to elicit speech from that which is mere matter fashioned by themselves. As to the literal interpretation of this, it should not offend the reader

when he recollects that the dumb ass was empowered of old to address Balaam ; and God, who did this to rebuke the madness of the Prophet, may act similarly in the present case ; and, for the exposure of man's idolatrous credulity, suffer this great myrmidon of Satan to inspire the inanimate statue.

And cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed.] Thus, we may gather the character of the utterances which the voice of the speaking image will enunciate—that they will be encomiastic orations in honor of the person of the Antichrist. For, failing of their idolatrous aim will, doubtless, be the occasion of the death to which the recusants shall be sentenced by the same voice. And such death, moreover, may be inflicted by the image. Just as it is related of some of the horrible idols, which are worshipped in heathen countries with human sacrifices, that they are so made as to embrace the devoted victims in their arms, and thus squeeze them to death. After this manner, it may be, that the image itself will be able to execute its sentence on God's faithful witnesses. Nor is the original at variance with this view, but the contrary ; for the word "*cause*" is evidently intended to predicate of the image some action, additional to the speaking, also ascribed to it. The only difference, it would appear, is that,

in this case, the mode of death will be by decapitation. For, in chapter xx, where the resurrection of the Antichrist's victims is described—such as “had not worshipped the beast, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands,”* (plainly identical with those contemplated in the clause before us,) they are emphatically described as having been *beheaded*. That the image of the beast may be constructed so as thus to behead those obnoxious to it, is easy to suppose. And its use, in this way, independent of its other imposing effects, may, of itself, render it an attractive idol, like the Guillotine to the licentious populace of France, at the close of the last century.

Ver. 16. *And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads.*] This is a further exploit of the False Prophet in honor of his patron. As in Pagan times, those who devoted themselves to the worship of a particular god were wont to brand themselves with some emblem of him, in token of their complete surrender to his service, so all classes who do prove amenable to the False Prophet's demand of adoration for the foregoing image, he forthwith proceeds to distinguish with a characteristic mark impressed upon the most

* Verse 4,

exposed part of their persons, the forehead, or the right hand; the former being part of their very visage, the latter, or working hand, being that most in requisition in their daily avocations. To this mark, it is probable, that the Prophet Zechariah alludes, in his predictions of the incipient cleansing of Jerusalem and its inhabitants from the consequences of Antichristian defilement, at the second advent of Messiah:—"In that day," says the Prophet, "there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness. And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord of hosts, that I will cut off the names of the idols out of the land, and they shall no more be remembered. And also I will cause the prophets and the unclean spirit to pass out of the land." Zech. xiii. 2. That this relates, not to anything that obtained at our Lord's first advent, is plain from the one fact, not to mention others, that, at that time, and, indeed, from after the restoration of the Jews from their captivity in Babylon, they were not addicted to idolatry. And that it does relate to the period of their future return to their land, from their present dispersion, is equally plain from the testimony of numerous prophecies to the effect that then idolatry shall be rampant among them; "the unclean spirit," as our Lord says, being to return and take possession of

that generation as his house, so that their last state shall be worse than the first.* But how does the Prophet Zechariah proceed? “And it shall come to pass, that when any shall yet prophecy,” (that is, attempt to continue the now repudiated wickedness of the Antichristian faction,) “then his father and his mother that begat him shall say unto him, thou shalt not live; for thou speakest lies, in the name of the Lord; and his father and his mother that begat him, shall thrust him through when he prophesieth.” Ver. 3. This, it would appear, shall be done with the first awakening impulse to national repentance. And as the parties thus dealt with, it is reasonable to conclude, shall have received the mark of the Beast, as his votaries, no doubt to that part of their persons thus disfigured, the blow of the indignant parents shall be especially directed; so that as many as, at the outset, escape with their lives from the family roof will show the double stigma of apostacy and retribution; some, on their hands; others, on their foreheads. Thus exiled and fugitive, while their final judgment is still in suspense at the hands of the Lord, they will, of course, endeavour to evade discovery. And now the Prophet recites their devices to this end,—their denial that they followed the disgraced

* Matt. xii. 43—45.

occupation, and their profession of that of the husbandman :—" He shall say, I am no prophet, I was an husbandman ; for man taught me to keep cattle from my youth." Ver. 5. But, immediately, if the forehead be free from suspicion, the hands shall be appealed to :—" And one shall say unto him, What are these wounds in thine hands?" At length the confession is extorted :—" Then he shall answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends." Zech. xiii. 1—6.

What the exact mark of the beast will be, we are not informed. But we may not unreasonably infer, that it will be a literal impression, of some kind, on the outward flesh, signifying, at the same time, some impious characteristic, in contrast with what will be imparted by the Father's name sealed on the foreheads of the 144,000 of the tribes of Israel. And thus, if the latter be, *the holy one*, or *Holiness*,*—the attribute which was inscribed on the High Priest's mitre of old, and which God formally identifies with Himself, when He would swear with an oath† and enjoin upon his people to be like him‡—the former will prove its converse. And how the assumption of it will be glorified in by mankind, we may conceive from the use recently made in France of the revolutionary

* Exodus xxviii. 36. † Psalm lxxxix. 35. ‡ Lev. xi. 45.

watch-words, Liberty, Equality, Fraternity. No doubt, in the madness which then seized upon the French populace, they would have brooked to be branded, in their persons, with any expressive symbol of their so called principles, had such been devised, and urged upon their adoption. Surely, from these germinations of evil, in our own day, we may gather hints concerning *the credible* in the crisis which is coming.

Before turning from the consideration of the mark of the beast, it may be instructive to observe, that it seems it will be at the option of the parties receiving it, whether it is impressed on the forehead, or, in the right hand. Both these parts of the person, as already noticed, will be sufficiently obvious to all with whom the votaries of Antichrist have intercourse. But there is a degree of difference between the two, in this respect, that the forehead will, *at once*, meet the gaze of the spectator, whilst the hand will not so immediately be recognized. Thus, then, there will be a latitude of confession allowed in the service of the Antichrist. They who shall not care to attach themselves to him with ostentatious effrontery, may take a more obscure position in the ranks, and yet be recognized. The pretended mother, unlike the real one, could bear the cutting in twain of the living child. Not so, in the service of God, He will not accept a divided heart, nor a partial obedience.

“Ye cannot,” says Jesus, “serve God and mammon.” Matt. vi. 24. Therefore his mark must be worn on the forehead, or not at all. There is no alternative. “For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father’s, and of the holy angels.” Luke ix. 26.

Ver. 17. *And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, [or] the name of the beast, or the number of his name.*] Omitting, as above, the use of the first disjunctive particle “or,” and this is warranted by the latest revision of the original text, we may consider the *name* of the beast as put in apposition with his *mark*, and then further resolved, by way of explanation, into what follows,—“the *number of his name*.” Thus all three expressions import the same thing, only with progressive explicitness. And whilst this view relieves the clause before us of what otherwise seems an abrupt introduction of a new idea, it accounts for the remarkable fact, that, in the subsequent recitals of this Book, only one Antichristian symbol is made mention of, as being in operation. Thus, in chap. xv. 2, we read of “them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over the number of his name.”* Here the category, though apparently

* The reader will perhaps have noticed, that, in our authorized

designed to be formal and particular, omits the *mark*, and the *name* of the beast. Again, in chap. xix. 20, the description of the apostates who perish is—"them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image;" still only one term is retained. To the same effect, the order of the clauses only being inverted, we read, in chap. xx. 4, of such as "had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands." Here, also, only one term is employed—and as though interchangeably with the others. Lastly, in chap. xiv. ; whereas, in ver. 11, the expression we meet with is "*the mark of his name*;" the antecedent phrase to which it manifestly refers, in ver. 9, is simply "*his mark*."

Thus, the inference is confirmed that, in the verse before us, the several expressions are designed to be substantially synonymous. The mark of the Beast will be his name, and that name will be constituted of a certain hieroglyphical number.

From the use that will be made of it, as here alleged, evidence is supplied to us of the despotic

version of this passage, there is included another clause, "over his mark;" but it is generally regarded as an interpolation of the original text, and accordingly omitted in the latest editions published.

government of the Antichrist, in the case of his more distant subjects ; for the former verse, with its double requisition, on all ranks, seems to contemplate those more nearly connected with the scene of Antichristian manifestation. Amongst the former class no commercial transaction shall be suffered to be carried on without his license ! But the really awful feature of his despotism is this ;—the *mode* in which alone his license will be obtainable—the receiving of his mark. For it will involve the devotion of the parties who submit to it to utter perdition ; such being the dreadful issue denounced by God upon those who are thus seduced, in common with those who worship the Beast, or his image :—“ If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation ; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone, in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb : And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever : and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth *the mark of his name.*” Chap. xiv. 9—11. Surely, this tremendous judgment shews the heinousness of the crime upon which it is denounced, and that it cannot amount

to less than a deliberate identification of the parties, body and soul, with the destiny of their Satanic ruler. And, alas ! how few will escape it, may well be our reflection as we contemplate the progress which the commercial principle is even now making amongst mankind ; whereby it may, at length, come to pass that no prohibition shall so address itself to their fears, in regard to self-interest, as that of buying or selling. And, no doubt, the Tyrant's policy will be evidenced in his making this, the sanction of his arbitrary edict.

But it is not from the spirit of the age merely that we are left to form our estimate of this future dispensation to come upon the world. The sure word of prophecy, which depicts the career of this great Usurper, also exposes the character of the apostacy of the last days, of which one feature is emphatically said to be covetousness.* And may it not be because of what it will, at last, lead to in the reception of the Beast's mark, as well as for other reasons, that this sin is elsewhere called *idolatry*?† Babylon, too, will then exert her intoxicating influence upon the world, and “through the abundance of her delicacies the merchants of the earth” will have “waxed rich.”‡ Whence is it, moreover, but from the lust after acquisition which is to prevail amongst Israel in the latter day, that we have such rebukes as the following in an

* 2 Tim. iii. 2.

† Col. iii. 5.

‡ Rev. xviii. 3.

epistle addressed to the twelve tribes:—"Go to now, ye that say, To day or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that." James iv. 13—15. Again, "Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days." James v. 1—3.

Child of God! how clear, in the light of this future crisis, is the demonstration of that proposition: "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." 1 John ii. 15. Oh! then, let not the bird-lime of its pursuits entangle our feet; but as the Apostle exhorts: "Let us who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation." 1 Thess. v. 8. Be the gracious motive also remembered: "For God hath not appointed us to wrath," (the wrath of the day of the Lord,) "but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ." Ver. 9.

Ver. 18. *Here is wisdom.*] This emphatic notice seems designed to awaken reverent attention in the reader. It is equivalent to saying that in the subject thus set before us, there is scope for the exercise of the utmost spiritual sagacity. Can we, then, approach the consideration of it without lifting up our hearts to the Father of lights, that he may endue us with all needful penetration on the occasion. And, oh! how encouraging the word with which God elsewhere anticipates, as it were, the self-reproach of even those children, who may have been heretofore indifferent to the matter, namely, that he giveth wisdom *without upbraiding*.* May He graciously vouchsafe this blessing now to the writer and reader of these pages!

Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is six hundred threescore and six.] Attention being arrested by the preceding notice, a clue is now given to aid investigation. The mark of the Beast, that is, his name, having resolved itself, as we have seen, into the number of his name, we are here informed what that number will be, “six hundred threescore and six;” answering, respectively, to the value of three Greek numerals, all of them of the power of *six*. Can we fail, then, to recognize herein the emblem of unity and yet

* See James i. 5.

subordination, the mimicry doubtless of what has obtained in the manifestation of the Triune God—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost? For, as the Son is the begotten of the Father; and the Holy Ghost proceeds from the Father and the Son, and yet there is the one Divine essence; so is six hundred a multiple of sixty, and both are multiples of six, and in the same ratio; the common root, six, pervading the units, the tens, and the hundreds. But, why, it may be asked, should the radical number be six, instead of any other which might yield the same relative products? It is submitted in reply, that this may be ordered of God to square with the portraiture of evil which is given in the Book of Proverbs, under the head of six things specially hateful to God, which are represented as culminating into seven,—the number of completeness,—and which all inhere in the character of the Antichrist. See Prov. vi. 16—19. Moreover, the design may be to intimate that the blasphemy yet to be developed in the Antichrist, was rehearsed of old in his impious predecessor, Nebuchadnezzar. For, it is remarkable, in respect to the golden image which he erected for idolatrous worship—type, as we have seen, of the image of the Antichrist—that its proportions were adjusted after the same numerical standard. Its “height,” we read, “was threescore cubits,

and the breadth thereof six cubits." Dan. iii. 1. According to this, then, perhaps we have, in the corresponding elements of the number of the beast,—the threescore and the six,—the symbol of the Antichrist, and the False Prophet combined ; whilst in the "six hundred,"—not supplied in connexion with Nebuchadnezzar's image,—we have shadowed forth the supreme headship of Satan, rivalling, as it were, the Fatherhood of God. Thus, the number, "six hundred threescore and six," indicating the relation of the Antichrist to his unseen superior, who energizes in him, may symbolize the mystery of Satan, for the initiation of his votaries,—counter to that of God, revealed in Christ, "in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." Col. ii. 3.

But not only will such number be adopted to this end ; it will, also, no doubt, in sundry distributions, spell out some actual name of the Antichrist, thus completing the identification of his person to the eye of faith, as the subject of Prophetic delineation throughout the Scriptures. Various are the names which have been suggested on this head, and much ingenuity has been employed to render their application plausible. Nor, indeed, are efforts in this direction inconsistent in those who believe that the Antichrist has already been revealed—as, for example, in

the Church and Pope of Rome. But as such view has not been taken in the present work, the Author feels that he need not embarrass his readers with speculation on the subject. The fact is, as the party contemplated is to answer to numerous other marks, and of a more unequivocal nature, such as his supernatural endowment, universal empire, &c., the dutiful and wise course would seem to be, to leave to the time of *their* development the fixing of the name. *Then*, we may not doubt, but that the comparison of the numeral in question with some of the Antichrist's assumed titles, will serve to emblazon, as it were, his identity, so that no servant of God can be deceived.

After all, it remains to remind the child of God, that it is not for the ANTICHRIST but for CHRIST that he is called to wait. Nor is the Revelation of the former to precede the Advent of the latter ; at least, to *him*. On the contrary, as already stated, the gathering of the saints to meet their Lord in the air, will be the initiating event to all others in the day of the Lord. Christ will first come *for* his saints ; then, in connexion with a revival of Jewish testimony on the earth, will Satan's master-piece be launched—the Antichrist ; and, finally, the Lord will come *with* his saints to take to himself his great power and reign.

To see that this is the order of events must surely be a relief to the heart of the Christian who realizes the horrors of Antichrist's career. For, thus, he may indulge in longings for the presence of his beloved Master, without the intimidating apprehension of such intervening ordeal—the frame of spirit which it appears to be the design of 2 Thess. ii. to encourage. See vol. i. p. 33. Reader, may this frame be ours; and let us gird up the loins of our mind accordingly, holding ourselves in readiness for our promised enlargement from our present chrysalis state in the flesh. What if there be incredulity on this point in the professing Church, affecting even some of God's dear children? Shall we allow it to affect the immutability of the Divine Word? Is it not revealed to us as the one uniting hope of believers in every generation, to which the Holy Ghost is wont to minister; so that the more his sanctifying operations abound in us, the more intensely we must long for this happy consummation? As the Apostle says:—"Ourselves also, which have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body." Rom. viii. 23.

CHAPTER XIV.

SECTION FIRST.

Verses 1—5.

1 And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty *and* four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads.

2 And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps:

3 And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred *and* forty *and* four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth.

4 These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, *being* the first-fruits unto God and to the Lamb.

5 And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God.

IN entering upon the consideration of this chapter, we must bear in mind that the visions recorded in it, like those in the two preceding chapters, are supplementary, and are designed as a prelude to the account of the pouring out of the vials, to enable us the better to understand the thread of the narrative, dropped at chap. xi. 19, and taken up in chap. xv. 5.

In this first vision, we have the Lord Jesus presented to us and his chosen band, who shall not have received the mark of the beast, but shall have his Father's name written in their foreheads.

Ver. 1. *And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb.*] It should be "*the* Lamb," the title of our blessed Lord, which, coming after the mention of the Antichrist as "*the* beast," is, of course, designed to stand in distinguishing contrast.

Stood on the mount Sion.] There is no reason why this should not be regarded as the literal Mount Sion, the same which is continually alluded to in the Old Testament Scriptures, especially the book of Psalms. And that such locality, connected as it is with Jerusalem, is destined to be the scene of marvellous events, we gather from numerous prophecies. The Prophet Joel, for example, speaking of the phenomena which will usher in the advent of Christ to the world, thus finishes his recital:—"And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord, shall be delivered: for *in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem* shall be deliverance, as the Lord hath said, and in the remnant whom the Lord shall call." Joel ii. 32. Again, in the fifty-ninth of Isaiah, we read:—"And the Redeemer shall come to *Zion*, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith the Lord." Ver. 20. Thus it appears that

Mount Zion will be the scene of the Lord's manifestation, when he first appears on earth. Nor is this inconsistent with what we read in Zechariah:—"His feet shall stand in that day upon the Mount of Olives." Zec. xiv. 4. For this statement is preceded by mention of his *going forth*, and fighting against the confederate nations, and surely he may "go forth" *from* Zion. Indeed, this is substantially affirmed by the Apostle Paul, where quoting Isaiah lix. 20., he varies the precise words, and says:—"There shall *come out of Zion* the deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob." Rom. xi. 26. And here the second Psalm comes in with its confirming testimony, for in connexion with the breaking of the nations with a rod of iron, and dashing them in pieces like a potter's vessel, the announcement is made, as of a preliminary event:—"Yet have I set my king upon my holy *hill of Zion*." Psalm ii. 6. See also Obadiah, verses 17 and 21, wherein we have the same association of the locality of "*Mount Zion*" with the deliverance of the Jewish people.

And with him an hundred forty and four thousand.] We learn elsewhere, (chap. xix.) that the Lord Jesus will come, accompanied by "the armies of heaven,"—his glorified saints—to consummate the destruction of the Antichrist and his adherents. But they shall not be the

only instrumentality employed on the occasion. We have here in this “hundred forty and four thousand” his *earthly* executive, which He will also put into requisition—the same, doubtless, to whom we have had allusion already in the seventh chapter. For though the definite article is not here given, and it is merely said, “an hundred forty and four thousand,” yet every thing connected with the description, in both cases, seems to correspond so accurately, that we cannot forbear identifying the two parties. See on chap. vii. vol. i. pp. 388—393.

Having his Father's name written in their foreheads.] In the most recent revision of the original text, this clause reads, ‘having his name and his Father's name written in their foreheads.’ The community of this distinguishing mark confirms what has been just said as to the identity of this company with the sealed ones in chap. vii. And as *the Lamb* is contrasted with the *Beasts* of the preceding chapter, so these now are fitly opposed to the votaries of the Antichrist. What the precise import of the name in question, and of its inscription on their foreheads, has been already hinted. See p. 263., and in vol. I.; pp. 386, 387.

The Divine purpose was to preserve this chosen band amidst the inflictions of wrath, to come upon the guilty, under the *trumpet* plagues; and

accordingly before the angels began to sound, the process of their sealing was rehearsed. It is also the Divine purpose to give them immunity from harm under the *vial* plagues, yea, to use them afterwards, as consummators of vengeance upon the rebellious nations; and hence, in this opening vision, they are now seen again wearing the same symbol of protection, and marshalled, moreover, for the expedition before them, under their glorious King.

Ver. 2. *And I heard a voice from heaven.*] First of all the Apostle sees on Mount Zion the Lamb, and his band of sealed ones. Now, in the notes of praise which are chaunted *in heaven*, he hears what is significant of the procedure in which they on *earth* are about to engage.

As the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder.] Both these similitudes are employed elsewhere; the *first*, to characterize the glorious utterance of our blessed Lord. “His voice,” says St. John, referring to the opening scene of this Book, “was as the sound of many waters.” Rev. i. 15. And Ezekiel, describing the vision he had of the GLORY OF THE GOD OF ISRAEL, says, “His voice was like the voice of many waters.” Ezek. xliii. 2.

The second similitude, we find used in the rehearsal of the action of the first of the four living creatures:—“I saw,” says St. John, “when

the Lamb opened one of the seals, and I heard one of the four living creatures, saying, as it were, with a voice of thunder.” Rev. vi. 1. Gk. Combining together these similitudes they set forth the liquid and melodious strains of the heavenly choir, with their occasional bursts, as it were, of Alleluias in full chorus.

And I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps.] The reading of this clause, which perhaps possesses most authority, is:—‘ And the voice which I heard was as that of harpers harping with their harps.’ Whichever reading we adopt, the idea is conveyed of the heavenly melody combining with it the sweetness of the harp. See on chap. v. 8.

Ver. 3. *And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, (living creatures,) and the elders.]* The proper reading (and the coherence of the context requires it) is, ‘ they sing’—the present tense. The parties thus engaged, as they are distinct from the 144,000, we now see to be also distinct from the glorified saints of this and past dispensations, represented, as has been observed, by the living creatures, and the elders. And who can such parties be, if we look beyond the angelic ranks, but the martyred ones under the Antichrist, whose resurrection, clearly stated in chap. xx., is here implied; and to whom the promise is that

they shall be associated with our Lord in the exercise of that judicial power over the nations with which he will commence His reign, as we have already gathered from Psalm ii. See also, Rev. ii. 26—28. And, this is a clue to the further understanding of the “*new song*” which now calls for consideration. It has been already mentioned as sung in heaven, the choir there being precentors, as it were, to the 144,000, on earth; just as the four living creatures and the twenty four elders, in chapter v., lead the adoring praise of all creation, whilst the lamb takes possession of the sealed book.

To pursue the subject, then, let us first turn to the Prophet Isaiah, ch. xlii. At verse 8. Jehovah, giving his commission to Messiah, thus speaks, in language which seems to contemplate the worship of the Antichrist and his image:—“I am the Lord; that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images.” We observe here the solemn assertion of God’s incommunicable glory, as though it were invaded, by some audacious usurper, exalted as an object of Divine worship. Whereupon the prophetic strain proceeds:—“Behold, the former things are come to pass, and new things do I declare; before they spring forth, I tell you of them.” That is,—as God had foretold the climax to which man’s wickedness

should reach, and his words had been verified by the event,—so He will now disclose, for the consolation of the faithful remnant, the righteous issue which He has, as surely determined on. And how is this introduced? By the animating words, addressed to all the inhabitants of the earth, even of the most desolate regions:—“Sing unto the Lord a new song;”—signifying that, at length, the promised redemption begins to take effect, and the government of the world in righteousness will henceforth proceed. Accordingly, a following verse represents Messiah the great Redeemer, as taking to himself his great power, wherewith to accomplish this glorious revolution:—“The Lord shall go forth as a mighty man, he shall stir up jealousy like A MAN OF WAR: he shall cry, yea, roar; he shall prevail” (or behave himself mightily) “against his enemies.” ver. 13. What is this, but a rendering into plain prophecy, of the vision of the Lamb seen on Mount Zion, with his hundred forty-and-four thousand chosen followers, about to tread down the Antichristian nations; and of the new song heard from heaven as the appointed pæan for the holy warriors.

It would appear, also, that it is in contemplation of the victories of the Lord Jesus, here represented, that the “new song” is introduced in Ps. xcvi. and again in Ps. xcvi. The strain of

the latter is particularly applicable:—"O sing unto the Lord a new song; for he hath done marvellous things; his right hand and his holy arm hath gotten him the victory. The Lord hath made known his salvation; his righteousness hath he openly shewed in the sight of the heathen." Ver. 1, 2. This clearly denotes a career of conquest over enemies. And that Jewish saints will actually bear arms on the occasion, is equally plain, from the language of Psalm cxlix.: "Praise ye the Lord, sing unto the Lord a new song, and his praise in the congregation of saints. Let Israel rejoice in him that made him: let the children of Zion be joyful in their King. Let them praise his name in the dance: let them sing praises unto him with the timbrel and harp. For the Lord taketh pleasure in his people: he will beautify the meek with salvation. Let the saints be joyful in glory: let them sing aloud upon their beds. Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a two-edged sword in their hand; to execute vengeance upon the heathen, and punishments upon the people; to bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron; to execute upon them the judgment written; this honour have all his saints. Praise ye the Lord." Ver. 1—9.

Surely we have here the same subject, the warfare of the chosen band on Mount Zion;

the hundred forty-and-four thousand, headed by their Divine leader, the true Joshua, who is to install his people Israel into their inheritance.

And no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand.] The “new song,” like the striking of a key-note, first sounds from heaven, as we have just gathered from the previous clause; and now it appears to be taken up by this company below. *They* are initiated into its import, and, it would seem, they only. Perhaps this distinction is conferred on them, to signify that as enlisted under the banner of Jesus, it is specially given to them to appreciate the wisdom of the Divine procedure, and its ultimate happy consequences to all mankind.

Which were redeemed from the earth.] To understand this description of them, we must remember that the second beast causes all them that dwell upon the earth to worship the first beast. Hence, they who hold out against the awful temptation, are, after some manner, *not of the earth*. And here we learn what this means. They were redeemed from it, not taken bodily out of it, but so *purchased*, as the word signifies, by the blood of the Lamb, as to become specially His people, severed by Divine grace from the corrupt mass around them. There is nothing in these words to indicate, what is commonly supposed, that this is a heavenly scene, and that the

parties in question have been translated from the earth.

Ver. 4. *These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins.*] When we remember that the character of the latter day is elsewhere revealed to be that of licentiousness and sensuality, it is quite congruous that we should take this description literally, and as intimating that the 144,000, to whom it is applied, are uncontaminated by the prevailing wickedness. It has been already remarked,* that the enticement of Israel of old into fornication and idolatry by Balak, king of Moab, and Baalam his adviser—types of the Antichrist and the False Prophet in the coming time,—was effected by means of Midianitish women sent into their camp. And when the crisis of retribution arrived, one thousand out of every tribe were formed into a detachment to go against the Midianites, and exact vengeance for their crime. Moreover, as Phinehas their leader was filled, we know, with a holy indignation against the workers of iniquity, we may reasonably suppose that this same emotion in measure appertained to all. To these striking precedents is to be added the fact, that of the elected thousands who composed this expedition, when the census was taken, not one was missing.

Now, putting together all these circumstances,

* See Vol I. pp. 391—393.

—that the antitypical scene before us should correspond in regard to the *character* of the chosen individuals, as it manifestly does in its other features, is what we should expect. Accordingly, such is depicted to be the case, so that when the cup of Babylon's fornication is circulating among the nations, and "*the doctrine*" (or teaching) "of Balaam" is being acted on even in the Churches,* we here gather that to the honour of these Israelites, and not forgotten by their Divine Master, they will, like Lot in Sodom, have eschewed the base temptation and refused "the voice of the charmers charming never so wisely."

These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth.] By the typical history, just referred to, wherein the plot laid against Israel by means of the Midianitish women is followed by the separation of a thousand out of every tribe, as the Lord's avengers upon the Midianites, having been led to recognize the twelve thousand out of every tribe in this vision, as being to engage in a similar career of retribution against the Antichristian hosts of the latter days, we now seem to have such view confirmed by the application to them of the present description, suitable, as it is, to the aspect of parties engaged on a martial expedition. The phraseology indeed, following the Lamb whithersoever he goeth,

* See Rev. ii. 14—20.

remarkably accords with the victorious progress assigned to Israel of old, under the leadership of Joshua, when he successively subdued the Canaanitish kings; for the record is several times emphatically repeated: "Joshua passed" from one city to another, "and all Israel with him." Josh. x. 29, 31, 34, 36, 38, 43.

Perhaps, as celebrating this course of warfare, we may further refer to Ps. lxviii., which begins, it is remarkable, with a war-cry, the same with which Moses was wont to accompany the marchings of Israel of old in the wilderness: "Let God arise, let his enemies be scattered: let them also that hate him flee before him." As the Psalm proceeds, further points of correspondence come into notice: "O God, when thou wentest forth before thy people; when thou didst march through the wilderness; the earth shook, the heavens also, dropped at the presence of God: even Sinai itself was moved at the presence of God, the God of Israel: . . . The Lord gave the word: great was the company (the *army*) of those that published it." Thus, we seem to have set before us, in accordance with this vision in the Apocalypse, the Lord at the head of a mighty host, marching with imposing progress. And then follows the utter dismay of the Antichristian ranks:—"Kings of armies did flee apace;" that is, as in the margin, "*did flee, did flee,*"—the expression repeated to

betoken consternation. All these striking events, and more that might be adduced from the same source, sufficiently show that, herein, the mind of the Spirit contemplates not merely the typical *past*, when God conducted Israel out of Egypt, but more especially the future, which has so many coincident features in the vision before us.

These were redeemed from among men, being the first-fruits unto God and to the Lamb.] This reiterates the distinguishing mercy of which this chosen band shall have been the subjects. But, besides the idea of preservation amidst judgments, which the former allusion to them more especially contains (ver. 3.), here is included the award of an honorable precedence above all who shall be eventually saved on the earth. To them shall attach the dignity of being the *first-fruits unto God and to the Lamb*—samples of that Divine power and protection which will afterwards embrace the whole nation of Israel and mankind at large. The first-born, we know, whether of men or animals, were particularly owned of God from the beginning;* and Israel is thus denominated by way of endearment: “Israel is my first-born.” Exodus iv. 22. Jer. iv. 22. Similarly, the first-fruits of the produce of the earth were claimed of God and set apart for his service; and this, we know, was typical of the relation occupied by the

* Numbers iii. 13; Leviticus xxvii. 26, 27.

risen Saviour to the saints that sleep in Him ; and again, by the Pentecostal Church, endued with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven ; for on the very day when the sheaf of first-fruits was waved before God, our blessed Lord rose from the dead ;* and the fiftieth day afterwards, when the wave-loaves—also called a first-fruits—were offered, was the day on which occurred the effusion of the Spirit.†

But, here, a point of some importance as bearing on the present application of the term first-fruits to the 144,000 of the tribes of Israel, is not to be overlooked—that is, that the Pentecostal Church was a gathering exclusively of *Jews* ; a nucleus for the attraction of the nation, if they would, to the standard of Christ. And in obvious keeping with this, are the recorded sermons of Peter to his assembled brethren, wherein, exhorting them to repentance, he announces to them that the issue of that repentance would be, that “ God would send Jesus which before was preached to them ;” whose advent he emphatically connects with the introduction of “ the times of restitution of all things,” that is, with the reign of Messiah over them. Acts iii. 19—21. Nor is the Church of God now, composed of Jew and Gentile, as the

* Compare Lev. xxiii. 10, 11, and Mark xvi. 1, 2, 6, 9, with 1 Cor. xv. 20.

† Compare Lev. xxiii. 15—17, with Acts ii. 1, &c.

body of Christ—the special mystery first confided to the ministry of the Apostle Paul—to be esteemed a mere accretion of the Pentecostal nucleus; but rather an entirely new piece of the Divine workmanship, into which, though that nucleus has become merged, its resuscitation in Jewish elements again, we are given to expect. Accordingly, whilst the typical application, generally, of the wave-loaves in Lev. xxiii. to the Church of this dispensation is fully admitted, may not the real antitype, in the way of strict interpretation, be the 144,000 of Israel here mentioned? And, surely, this suggestion derives confirmation from the Epistle of James, wherein the Apostle uses these remarkable words: “Of his own will begat he us, with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures.” James i. 18. Allowing to this Epistle a prophetic aspect, of which it bears many indications, as we have already seen;* may we not identify with the 144,000, the believing community which is thus denominated first-fruits,—composed also, as we find them to be of a body of the twelve tribes? For, to such, the inscription of the Epistle belongs: “James, a servant of God, and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad greeting.” James i. 1.

Ver. 5. *And in their mouth was found no*

* See Vol. I. pp. 46, 101—103, 199.

guile.] Thus they will have stood in contrast with the multitude around them. For, amongst other characteristics of the perilous times in question, we read that “men shall be. . . .truce-breakers. . . . traitors.” 2 Tim. iii. 3, 4. They shall have been thus opposed, also, to the great leader of the Apostacy; for treachery will eminently attach to him, as we read in Psalm lv:—“He hath put forth his hands against such as be at peace with him; he hath broken his covenant. The words of his mouth were smoother than butter, but war was in his heart; his words were softer than oil, yet were they drawn swords.” Ver. 20, 21. Moreover, herein, in their guilelessness of spirit, shall these sealed ones be conformed to their Lord himself; for the same thing substantially is applied to him, in the Prophet Isaiah:—“neither was any deceit in his mouth.” Isaiah liii. 9. Their distinction will be that of Nathanael of old, of whom our Lord said: “Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!” John i. 47. See also Zeph. iii. 13.

Perhaps it is the company thus characterized, and occupying a position, let us remember, “*on Mount Zion*,” (ver. 1.) to whom the Psalmist makes a special reference when he says, “Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully.” Ps. xxiv. 3, 4.

Again, to the same effect: “ Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill? He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart.” Psalm xv. 1, 2. See also Isaiah lxiii. 8.

For they are without fault before the throne of God.] The last clause, “ before the throne of God” is omitted in the most approved editions of the original text. And its interpolation, here, has served to obscure the understanding of the passage, as implying that the 144,000 constitute a company *in heaven*; whereas, we have already seen that they stand upon Mount Zion, that is, on the earth. The incongruity is at once removed by the amended reading; and the simple truth stated is, that they are “without blame.” As in the case of Daniel, in the court of Darius, their enemies shall not be able to find any occasion against them, except concerning the law of their God. Indeed, it is remarkable that almost the very words of this clause are employed by the Spirit in his commendation of Daniel:—“ He was faithful, neither was there any error or *fault found in him.*” Dan. vi. 4.

CHAPTER XIV.

SECTION SECOND.

Verses 6—13.

6 And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people.

7 Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him ; for the hour of his judgment is come : and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.

8 And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.

9 And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive *his* mark in his forehead, or in his hand,

10 The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation ; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb :

11 And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever : and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name.

12 Here is the patience of the saints : here *are* they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.

13 And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed *are* the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth : Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours ; and their works do follow them.

HERE are further supplementary visions to enable us the better to apprehend the character of that crisis when the vials of wrath shall be poured out on the earth. As we have just seen, there will

be a special election of righteous ones from the tribes of Israel, who, having been preserved from apostacy and judgment, shall eventually constitute Messiah's earthly executive, when, at his appearing, he shall go forth, personally, against the Antichristian hosts. We are now further taught, that as in the case of the plagues of Egypt, so prior to the outpouring of the vials, a merciful warning of their approach will be given to mankind, if, peradventure, they will, even at the last moment, renounce their idolatry and do homage to the true God. Again, the knell of Babylon's downfall is sounded,—that city which will yet be the prolific centre of all iniquity. And to intimidate from fellowship in any way with the Antichrist, who has now attained the height of his ascendancy, the most terrible retribution is denounced against his votaries.

Ver. 6. *And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven.*] The denomination of this angel, “*another*,” is in relation to the similar agency recounted in ch. viii. 13. There—one of those heavenly intelligences, “*that excel in strength*,” had published a warning note, preliminary to the last three of the trumpet plagues. He is now succeeded on a like errand, by one of his fellows, who is represented in the same way, as *flying in the midst of heaven*.

It is also remarkable that the Apostle Paul, cautioning the Galatians against the imposition on them of another gospel, that is, one contradictory to what they had already received, supposes this kind of demonstration to be resorted to, as calculated to overcome all incredulity.

Having the everlasting Gospel.] The kingdom of Messiah being an “*everlasting kingdom*,” as described in Daniel vii. 27. The Gospel or glad tidings specially referring to that kingdom is accordingly here called “*the everlasting Gospel*.” Our Lord, in his prophecy upon the Mount, denominates it simply, the “Gospel of the kingdom,” the preaching of which is to usher in what he emphatically calls “the end.” Indeed, in the context, he sufficiently explains the import of the expression, so that we may see its correspondence ; for he introduces it with the demonstrative pronoun *this*—“this Gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations.” Matt. xxiv. 14. And the only antecedent which can be recognized in the context, is the announcement of our Lord himself in connection with the tribulation of the last days : “He that endureth to the end shall be saved ;” ver 13. That is, the faithful survivors of the terrible ordeal through which mankind shall then pass, will at length be brought into the enjoyment of the promised kingdom.*

* See Apocalyptic Interpretation, pp. 68, 69.

A renewal of testimony, like that of the Apostles of old, to this blessed prospect, will also be going on throughout the cities of Israel;* but this angelic proclamation of it will be a last signal, as it were, of its approach, encouraging the righteous, and warning the wicked.

To preach unto them that dwell on the earth.] As the word “earth” here, may with equal propriety be translated “land,” it appears such alteration should be adopted; for, otherwise, the following clause is but a repetition of this. Whereas, with the alteration in question, the proposition is, that the angel is commissioned to publish his message, with a special inclusion of *the occupants of Palestine*, composed of the Jews and the Antichristian assemblage of Gentiles.

And to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people.] Thus, the heavenly proclamation will be co-extensive with the power of the Antichrist; for, over these very distributions of mankind, his influence is described as prevailing. See ch. xiii. 7, 8. And in such corresponding provision of the antidote to meet the bane, how manifest the Divine mercy!

Ver. 7. *Saying with a loud voice, Fear God and give glory to him.]* This is a usual form of exhortation in the Scriptures, touching our duty towards God. It is true He is all-sufficient and self-sufficient; and in the sense of communication, the

* See Matt. x. 22, 23.

creature can impart nothing to Him. But whilst we confess our own unworthiness, we can acknowledge what He is, and what He hath graciously done for us, thus showing forth His praises ; and this is the end of our redemption. Moreover, to “fear God and give glory to Him,” is sometimes the expression for repentance ;* and so the angelic summons is especially suitable to the juncture in question ; for, as the next clause implies, it will be one marked by the prevalence of even gross idolatry.

But, besides this general improvement of these words, we should not overlook that, in their strict interpretation, they have a peculiar import, which distinguishes them from the Gospel message by which the Church of God is now being gathered ; for the latter simply presents to the sinner—God in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself ; and it is only by his reception of this grace that the sinner can respond to the Divine call made upon him. But, here mankind are cited not to the contemplation of God’s redeeming grace, but to submission to Him, who, as the insulted Creator, is now about to make known His “terrible acts.” Psalm cxlv. 11—13. In fact, the angel before us is like Noah in relation to the Antediluvians—“a preacher of *righteousness* ;” and like Jonah in his commission to the Ninevites, advertising the

* See on Ch. xi. 13,

wrath that is impending—rather than a preacher of the unsearchable riches of Christ.

For the hour of his judgment is come.] That is, the crisis for the outpouring of the vials of wrath, followed, as they will be, by the personal appearance of the Lord himself, to execute judgment and justice in the earth; such crisis is now at hand; and a proclamation to this effect may well be employed to intimidate, and, peradventure, to reclaim the wicked, while stimulating the faithful to continued allegiance.

And worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.] This clearly implies, as already observed, that mankind at the period in question will be more or less given to idolatry; and similar allusions abound in the Psalms. For example, in Psalm xcvi., which obviously celebrates the establishment of the Lord's kingdom on the earth, we read:—"Confounded be all they that serve graven images, that boast themselves of idols: worship him, all ye gods." ver. 7. Again, in Psalm xcvi. we have another variation of the same theme:—"all the gods of the nations are idols: but *the Lord made the heavens.*" ver. 5. And here, in the vindication of Jehovah's title to homage, from His having created the heavens, the parallelism with the passage before us in the Apocalypse is striking.

But why, it may be asked, is it maintained with

such detail that God also made “the earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters?” The answer is at once apparent, when we see that upon these several departments of nature, and in the same order, the vial plagues successively take effect. See ch. xvi. 2—4. Such being the precise inflictions impending, the angel’s proclamation naturally appeals to them, in connection with his assertion of Jehovah’s claims to worship, as contrasted with the idolatry then prevalent.

The import of the angel’s proclamation having been thus considered, it must be almost needless to remark that it does not constitute the theme for the faithful Evangelist now to adopt. But at the crisis in question, when Israel are about to resume their place on the earth, and when human society shall have burst, as it were, from all its moorings, such theme will be truly seasonable; and the declaration that “verily there is a God that judgeth the earth,” will be welcome to every ear that is attuned to the harmony of the promised kingdom.

Nor is the preaching of the Apostle Paul in Acts xvii., where he addresses the idolatrous Athenians in terms similar to those before us, inconsistent with this, but rather the reverse. Let us consult the passage:—“Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars’ hill, and said, Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious.

For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you. God that made the world, and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed anything, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things. Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device. And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent: Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead." Acts xvii. 22—31.

Now, for the understanding of this language of the Apostle, be it observed that his ministry, at this time, indeed as it is recorded all through the Acts, except in the way of an under-current afterwards to flow forth openly, was consentient with that of the twelve Apostles as such, which contemplated the promised kingdom of Messiah, as about to extend itself even then throughout the earth, from Jerusalem as its centre. Thus it was

“the word of *the kingdom*,” in its bearing upon the heathen, rather than the exceeding riches of God’s grace, (which constitute the Gospel of our dispensation,) that Paul published on Mars’ Hill;* the same therefore, in import, as we have seen, with the everlasting Gospel of the Apocalyptic angel; but not the standard of the Church’s testimony now.

It may be added, that the diversity between Paul’s teaching, yea, *conduct*, in the Acts, and his teaching in his Epistles, is a subject which needs more delicate discrimination than has hitherto been bestowed on it by God’s children. Just as in the construction of harmonies of the Gospels, wherein the variety of narration—albeit, exhibiting, in reality, the wisdom of the Holy Ghost—has been treated as an inconvenience to be gotten rid of; so it has been in regard to the twofold character in question of St. Paul’s ministry, man’s effort has been to amalgamate, where God would have us to distinguish.

Ver. 8. *And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city.*] This messenger, of course, we cannot doubt, belongs to the same order of beings as his predecessors. See ver. 6, and ch. viii. 13. To him, it appears, is confided another announcement, and we may presume he publishes it in

* See also Acts xiv. 13—17.

the same way. The subject is the downfall of Babylon, and it is twice affirmed probably to signify, as in the case of the doubling of Pharaoh's dream, that "the thing is established by God, and God will shortly bring it to pass." Gen. xli. 32. As yet, this proud monument of man's ambition, antitype of Babel of old, will not have been overthrown. But in conformity with the word of prophecy, the righteous catastrophe now draweth nigh; and intimation hereof—whatever effect it will have upon the world at large—will, doubtless, sustain the faith and patience of God's witnessing people, (see ver. 12,) and to this end, probably, it is here given.

The principle having been already urged in preceding parts of this work, that Babylon, in the Scriptures, means Babylon, as literally as Jerusalem means Jerusalem,* it is only needful to add here, that, besides the distinct prophecy of the *rebuilding* of such great city contained in Zechariah's vision of the ephah,† as well as its recognition in the Apocalypse, our Lord seems to allude to it in his parable of the leaven, "hid in three measures of meal;"‡ for these three measures (*σάρα*) contain exactly the quantity of one ephah; and the mention of "*a woman*," as hiding

* See Vol. I., pp. 125, 161, 364.

† Zech. v. 5—11. See Vol. I., p. 162.

‡ Matt. xiii. 33.

them, remarkably corresponds with the similar personification of Babylon in the Apocalypse, and the circumstantials of the ephah vision, in Zechariah.*

If it occur to the reader as strange that the downfall of Babylon, (the literal city,) from its zenith of splendour and magnificence, should be celebrated by the Apostle John in this book, when, in his day, if not ruined, it had, at least, sunk into obscurity and decay; it is to be remembered that the like method of the Spirit obtains in the prophecy of Isaiah, and concerning the same event. For, at the time when he was inspired to describe Babylon as fallen from its pinnacle of grandeur, it had not risen, nor did it rise, for upwards of a century after, into any importance in the earth. See Isaiah xiii. 19. *See xxxix*

If, then, only in a prediction of its destruction, the original grandeur of this city was inclusively rehearsed by Isaiah, and when that grandeur lay altogether in embryo, why should we be stumbled at the implication of its *revived* grandeur given at the period of its decline when John also foretels the same final catastrophe.

And, surely, there is nothing incredible in the particular event, when, irrespective of the word, “*thus saith the Lord*,” which, of itself, ought to command our faith, we contemplate the character of the last days as distinguished by the putting

* See Zech. v.

forth of diabolical energy, in connection with the marvellous progress of human enterprise and science in our own times. The rapid transformation, which we ourselves witness, of places once insignificant, into imposing seats of commerce, may suggest to us what an enthusiastic community, inspired by some new impulse, will then be able to achieve in regard to Babylon.

Because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.] Such is the infamy that will attach to Babylon, and which will at length, bring down the Divine judgment upon her. From her, as a centre, will have spread, amongst mankind, a moral pestilence, so that under some flimsy guise of natural liberty, the sexes every where will be initiated into an unbridled indulgence of their sensual passions.*

Perhaps, the best help to our conception of this subject, is the case of the neighbouring capital—Paris, whence, in her revolutionary paroxysms from time to time, have been propagated throughout Europe—and that, under cover of a cosmopolitan patriotism, principles of utter anarchy. It would appear also, that in this respect, the influence of this corrupt city will operate like wine with an inebriating effect, while its being further called the wine of the *wrath* of her fornication, implies the terrible anger of God with which the

* See Vol. I., pp. 159—168.

participation of it will be surely attended. See Jer. li. 7.

Ver. 9. *And the third angel followed them.*] The succession of this agent is in relation to the two preceding, already referred to. See ver. 6, and chap. viii. 13.

Ver. 9, 10. *Saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation.*] We have already contemplated, in chap. xiii., the scene of Antichrist's worship; his representation by an image; and a mark, which will be received by his votaries. We now see, either that a solemn warning shall have been given from heaven against any participation in this idolatry] (if we date this vision so far back) or, which is the more probable view—that, at length, like the sentence of a criminal preparatory to his execution, the Divine denunciation of the fearful wrath awaiting the apostates, now issues forth against them. And, surely, it may well make the ears of all that hear it tingle.

Answering to Babylon's cup—"the wine of the wrath of her fornication"—of which, doubtless, in connection with the worship of the Beast, the guilty parties shall have drunk an intoxicating draught, their retributive portion will henceforth

be to drink of “the wine of the wrath of God.” Elsewhere, this reserved outpouring of the Divine indignation is spoken of “as full of mixture.” Psalm lxxv. 8. But here, it is observable, that the description is “without mixture.” Of this apparent contradiction, however, a comparison of the original here, with the Septuagint version of the Old Testament, affords an easy solution. For, therein, the expressions employed are substantially the same. In the text immediately before us, they are *οίνου...του κεκρασμενου ακράτου*—*wine, that which is mixed, without mixture*. In Psalm lxxv. 8, we have *οίνου ακράτου πληρες κρασματος*—*wine unmixed, full of mixture*. And the paradox of both phrases is at once removed by the consideration, that the corresponding clauses, “*without mixture*,” and “*unmixed*,” refer to the wine being undiluted; whilst the remaining clauses, “*mixed*,” and “*full of mixture*,” convey the additional idea of the wine being *drugged*, *i. e.* rendered more stimulating by the infusion of extra ingredients; and in these statements there is nothing inconsistent. The discrepancy is only in our English translation, which, with the view of avoiding the paradox, by confining itself to one descriptive term, has unfortunately not selected that which is parallel in both texts.

And he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone.]

By this means, we know, Sodom and Gomorrah

perished of old. Gen. xix. 24. Fire and brimstone also are included in that terrible outpouring of the Divine anger of which we read in Psalm xi. :—
 “Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest: this shall be the portion of their cup.” (ver. 6.) See also Ezek. xxxviii. 22.

In the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb.] “When the Son of man shall come in his glory,” our Lord adds, that “all the holy angels” shall be *with him*. Matt. xxv. 31. To this time, accordingly, we may consider that the passage before us refers.

Ver. 11. *And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever.]* Thus the description here is accumulative. Every expression that can minister to the conception of penal suffering is combined by the Spirit, to exhibit what those who are in league with the Antichrist may expect to encounter at the hands of a holy God. Nor is the *eternity* of their torment to be overlooked. However the fiery flood into which they shall be cast may operate upon their natural bodies, and so produce ordinary death, yet is there another body reserved for them, when raised for final judgment, (and this we may consider as specially referred to,) wherein the sentence shall be ever executing, and never exhausted. Certainly there is no form of expression by which eternal

suffering could be described more unequivocally ; “ for ever and ever ”—literally, *ages of ages*—being the same phrase by which is represented the duration of God himself. See chap. x. 6. Proud man may arraign this doctrine at the bar of his fallen reason, and declare it to be impossible ; and even some Christians may affirm it to be inconsistent with the idea of abounding grace in Christ ; but it is one of the correlatives of the infinite work of redemption. And what unfathomable depths are here—God manifest in the flesh, and dying on the cross ! Who could have conceived such an expenditure of Divine love, or its mode of accomplishment ! And, yet, this marvel has been realized. What forbids it, then, that eternal suffering should be the portion of those who reject this great mystery ? At all events, “ *thus saith the Lord,* ” and let this command the faith of all who tremble at His word. Besides the direct testimony of this and other like passages, let us remember the emphatic statement of our blessed Lord, in reference to Judas :—“ Woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed ! it had been good for that man if he had not been born.” Matt. xxvi. 24.) Surely, if there *ever* be escape from the pit of perdition, existence will have proved a positive blessing. But, herein, our Lord rules the contrary : in Judas’s case, (and surely it is applicable to *all* the wicked,) non-existence being, comparatively, an enviable portion.

And they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name.] Thus, by both positive and negative description, the sufferings of the wicked are set forth. Perhaps, in succumbing to the pretensions of the Antichrist, and identifying themselves with his cause, they will have consulted for carnal ease and enjoyment; and hence, the recorded experience of their far different portion, even unintermitting torment, may be designed as a sort of righteous retort.

Ver. 12. *Here is the patience of the saints.]* This notice of the trying exercise of God's faithful witnesses has occurred before. Chap. xiii. 10. Their lot being cast in such a season of tribulation, when the wicked shall be in the ascendant, they will have to endure "a great fight of afflictions." But thus we learn that, for their consolation and support, the Divine recognition shall rest upon them. The Lord will know the way that they take, and they shall be made sensible of it.

Here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.] Thus the "saints" of the preceding clause are described. For though these characteristics belong to the people of God in all ages, yet they emphatically distinguish the witnesses against Antichrist in the latter day, in reference to whom the same terms have been employed in chap. xii. 17. A slight difference,

indeed, is observable, in that *there* it is the possession of “the *testimony* of Jesus,”—the expression for the prophecies of this book, indeed, prophecy in general*—which is noticed. Here it is the keeping “the *faith* of Jesus.” But the latter proposition implies the former, only supplementing the idea by suggesting, that the testimony of Jesus, especially his word, “I come quickly,” will be responded to by the faith of this remnant—an exception as they will prove to the case of mankind at large. See Luke xviii. 8. Perhaps it is also intended that Jesus is the great prototype of their faith; that as the Apostle Paul exhorts, they will run their race, “looking unto Him the author,” or more correctly, “*the leader and the finisher of the faith*,”† *i. e.* of the life of faith; that they will take Him as their bright and animating example, “who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame;” and so they will persevere in their faithful career, as He did, unto the end. It may be to this same truth—the rehearsal, as it were, of our Lord’s faith personally—that the Apostle alludes in his Epistle to the Galatians, where he says:—“The life which I now live in the flesh, *I live by the faith of the Son of God.*” Gal. ii. 20.

* Rev. xix. 10.

† Heb. xii. 2. The above rendering of this text, it is submitted, is required by the original, as well as by the coherence of the context; the subject of the apostle, both before and after he introduces it, being the *example* of our blessed Lord,

Ver. 13. *And I heard a voice from heaven.*] Doubtless, the voice of the Lord Jesus, which had fallen upon the Apostle's ears, in the opening visions of this book. Chap. i. 10, 12; iv. 1.

Saying unto me, Write.] Such was the general direction given in regard to the matter of the whole book, in chap. i. 19. It is now repeated in special connexion with the utterance which here follows, and signifies the Lord's care to have the same recorded for the comfort of His people.

Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, from henceforth.] As we have already seen, at the time here contemplated, the faithful will be exposed to dreadful suffering and temptation. But death—the worst the enemy can inflict—will be but a dismissal of his victims to rest, and the interval shall be short till their glorious resurrection. Hence, accordingly, this note of congratulation from heaven, upon the case of all who die in the Lord, from henceforth. Their sufferings are at an end—nor shall they have to wait long for their reward. But constituting, as they do, the remaining complement of martyred ones represented in the vision of the souls under the altar, (chap. vi. 9—11,) the accomplishment of their death will exhaust the “little while” of their brethren's suspense, and so usher in the resurrection of the whole company, as beheld in chap. xx. 4.

Of course, from this oracular announcement, departing members of the church of God, in every age, have derived most cheering consolation; and at the prospect of death, it ministers the same to every believer now. But it is obvious, from the context, that the design here is to encourage—especially from a certain time, (*henceforth*)—those who shall “die in the Lord,” in the sense of dying *for him*; thus, indeed, we find the original preposition sometimes taken.* The following clauses especially confirm this view.

Yea, saith the Spirit.] Thus, the previous voice of Christ from heaven is echoed by the Spirit; just as the personal addresses of our Lord to the Seven Churches are accompanied by the notice:—“He that hath an ear let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.”

That they may rest from their labours.] Here is explicitly annexed to the pronounced blessedness of those who die in the Lord, one happy consequence in which it consists—immediate repose to the emancipated spirit. It is not a topic much dwelt on in the New Testament; and, doubtless, because to the Church, as the body of Christ and members one of another, the isolated enjoyment of the individual is not the suitable object of hope, but rather the coming of the Lord Jesus—the blessed event in which every believer,

* See Matt. vi. 7; 1 Peter iv. 14.

whether among the quick or dead, is alike interested with the Lord himself. Still, whenever the happiness of the disembodied spirit is occasionally alluded to, it is in terms of most blissful import. “To be absent from the body,” says the Apostle, is to be “present with the Lord.” 2 Cor. v. 8. And so we find the dying Stephen, as he looked up steadfastly into heaven, declaring that he beheld Jesus standing at the right hand of God; not sitting, be it observed, the usual expression for our Lord’s Priestly rest, but *standing*—the posture of one in readiness to receive his welcome guest. Acts vii. 56. In the Old Testament, the allusions to this subject—though not indeed with the glowing emotion which seems to have been reserved for the experience of the Spirit of adoption under this dispensation, are yet more numerous. And, perhaps, one passage in the Prophet Isaiah points to the very crisis upon which we are now remarking:—“The righteous perisheth, and no man layeth it to heart: and merciful men (men of kindness, or godliness) are taken away, none considering that the righteous is taken away from the evil to come.” Isaiah lvii. 1. These words certainly accord with a period of martyrdom—one aspect of the context before us; and, in the next verse, we have a similar transition to the happy issue with the sufferers:—“He shall enter into peace, they

shall rest in their beds, each one walking in his uprightness.” ver. 2.

To the same effect, the decease of the Prophet Daniel is spoken to, in the last verse of his prophecy :—“ But go thou thy way, till the end be ; for thou shalt *rest*, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days.” Dan. xii. 13. The reference herein to Daniel’s ultimate hope is in further keeping with another blessed consequence of the death of the martyred ones before us ; for the Spirit proceeds :—

And their works do follow them.] Or follow *with them*, as it is more forcibly in the original, implying *the reward of their works* ; for no other meaning can be supposed than a quickly succeeding consummation of their bliss in resurrection glory. In the case of many generations of saints, the reward of their works, in resurrection, will not have ensued till long after their spirits have entered into rest. But here such fruition will be speedy—resurrection triumphing over death almost at once. This interpretation only, the reader will observe, contributes the adequate meaning which seems to be required by the emphatic note of time, “ *henceforth*,” in the previous clause of this verse. On any other ground than such assigned nearness of the great consummation, one cannot account for the special congratulation of those whose death is the subject of the Spirit’s comment.

CHAPTER XIV.

SECTION THIRD.

Verses 14—20.

14 And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud *one* sat like unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle.

15 And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle, and reap ; for the time is come for thee to reap ; for the harvest of the earth is ripe.

16 And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth : and the earth was reaped.

17 And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle.

18 And another angel came out from the altar, which had power over fire ; and cried with a loud cry to him that had the sharp sickle, saying, Thrust in thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth ; for her grapes are fully ripe.

19 And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast *it* into the great winepress of the wrath of God.

20 And the winepress was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the winepress, even unto the horse bridles, by the space of a thousand *and* six hundred furlongs.

It has been already observed that from chap. xi. 19, to chap xv. 5, the visions of this book are parenthetical, supplying information helpful to the understanding, both of what preceded, and what is yet to follow in the order of events. The reader must, therefore, distribute such information

accordingly. That which is now immediately before us is plainly anticipative, giving a general idea of what will happen in that "*hour of judgment*," fore-announced by the angel. Ver. 7.

Ver. 14. *And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man.*] Without doubt, it is the Lord Jesus who is here represented; for by the same words, "like unto the Son of man,"—He is designated in chap. i. 13. And both in the Old and New Testaments He is described as coming to the earth with the clouds of heaven. See Psalm xviii. 10; Psalm civ. 3; Isaiah xix. 1; Luke xxi. 27. That He will not have actually descended to the earth, at this moment, is to be concluded, from the precise position assigned to him, *sitting upon the cloud*. But that there will be some manifestation of Him, in the heavens, as though superintending the transaction now about to ensue, cannot be doubted. Perhaps, herein will consist "the sign of the Son of man in heaven," of which our Lord speaks, apparently, as a preliminary to his accomplished advent, "in power and great glory." Matt. xxiv. 30.

Having on his head a golden crown.] Such is another of our Lord's insignia, to set forth His glory, and so, in Psalm xxi., of which he is certainly the antitype, if not the direct subject, we read.—"Thou settest a crown of pure gold on his

head.” ver. 3. That head, once mocked with a crown of thorns, shall now appear in royal majesty, crowned with glory and honour.

And in his hand a sharp sickle.] This emblem of the harvest-man is manifestly connected with the character of the work upon which our Lord is now about to enter, that of reaping the earth, or as it is said elsewhere, without metaphor—*judging the earth*; for to him hath the Father committed all judgment. John v. 22.

Ver. 15. *And another angel came out of the temple.*] The temple here is, either that in heaven, in which case, this angel would seem to be a messenger from the Father to Christ, as the great Executive of the Divine will; or, it is the sanctuary on earth, the station of observation, whence an angel is appointed to signal the precise moment for the reaping process to begin. Perhaps the latter view ought most to be commended to us by the consideration that, if it were “the temple *in heaven*” which was intended, the specific words would be added, as, in such case, we find them in ver. 17, and not left to be supplied.

Crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle and reap.] Such is the word which initiates the harvest scene.

For the time is come for thee to reap.] This is one general reason assigned for beginning the work. The exact hour (ώρα) appointed in the

Divine counsels has arrived. And it is now announced to the Lord Jesus—the ordained Executive of the Father, unto whom all judgment has been committed. John v. 22.

For the harvest of the earth is ripe.] Here is stated another reason for the angelic signal, although resolving itself into the foregoing. The true Israel's oppression, and the arrogant iniquity of Antichrist and his followers, have reached their height. This allegation strikingly fits in with our Lord's parable of the tares, as though implying what is therein expressed,—the impatience of the servants to precipitate operations in rooting up the tares. That impatience was met by the word of the householder:—"Nay, lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest." *Now*, it appears, this appointed season has arrived, and there is no need of longer delay. Hence, also, apprehending the unity of subject between these Scriptures, we may apply to the present scene the information of the parable, that "*the harvest is the end of the world*,"* or rather AGE (αἰῶνός), that very period which the disciples had in view when they asked our Lord, "What shall be the sign of thy coming, and of *the end of the world* (AGE)?" Mat. xxiv. 3. And here, it is to be carefully observed, in order to the determination of the

* Matthew xiii. 29, 39.

period intended, that in both these passages it is used relatively, not to the hope of the Church, but to that of the Jewish nation; for in neither context is the Church brought into view at all. Our Lord spoke not in reference to it, the time not having come for the development of this mystery;* and it is plain the disciples were altogether ignorant of such being reserved in the purpose of God, and so could not have enquired concerning it. Oversight of this, and bringing in the Church where it has no place, seems to be that which has created the difficulties of Commentators in the interpretation of these and other Scriptures with which they are connected. The suggestion now offered, it is trusted, will shew its usefulness in the way of elucidation as we proceed.

Ver. 16. *And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth, and the earth was reaped.*] This is a concise account of the harvest operations. But the details are supplied to us in the parable just cited, wherein we learn several particulars:—

I. The condition presented by the harvest-field—the world.

II. The reapers employed on the occasion.

III. Their order of procedure.

IV. The happy result to gladden the heart of the great Husbandman.

* Ephesians iii. 9, 10.

Upon these particulars, a few remarks may be useful. And—

I. As to *the condition of the harvest-field*. It is found occupied by a mingled crop—wheat and tares. The former being the children of the kingdom—a denomination answering to those who shall have received the good seed, “the word of the kingdom;” the latter being the children of the Wicked One, propagated by the great enemy, Satan. In short, they are the followers of Christ, and the followers of Antichrist. From the appropriation elsewhere of the term “children of the kingdom” to the Jewish people generally,* we may presume that, under this head, such are the parties contemplated here—at least, principally. In their ranks, both within and without the promised land, shall be found several remnants of believing ones, holding fast, amidst all opposition, the hope of their forefathers. But apostacy, also, shall be rife amongst them, and many shall cleave to *him* who will have “come in his own name”—the Beast, as we have seen, of chap. xiii., who shall cause all his votaries to do him homage, and to receive his characteristic mark. Thus, of the seed of Abraham there will be children of the kingdom, to be owned of the Lord when He comes; and children of the kingdom—unworthy of the name—to be cast out.

* See Matthew viii. 12.

No doubt the discrimination of the harvest-scene will further affect the Gentile nations. But their concern in it will be only subordinate, like that of the camp-followers of an army in the subsequent issue of victory or defeat; and so it suffices to bring before us the case of the covenant people—those who are under a special responsibility before God.

II. *The reapers employed.* They are the holy angels. The Son of Man—he that sitteth on the white cloud—shall send them forth as his ministerial agents.*

III. *Their order of procedure.* They shall deal first with the tares. “The son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.” Matt. xiii. 41, 42. To this agrees the kindred parable of the net and the fishes, in regard to the refuse which are cast away: “So shall it be,” says our Lord “at the end of the world (age,) *the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just.*” Matt. xiii. 49. To the same effect, the Psalmist thus addresses the righteous:—“Before your pots can feel the thorns” (*i.e.* the wicked, crackling like thorns, to which they are elsewhere compared, in regard to their carnal mirth)† “he

* See Matt. xiii. 41.

† Eccles. vii. 6,

shall take them away, as with a whirlwind, both living, and in his wrath." Psalm lviii. 9. After this sudden manner, shall the tares be snatched out of the holy land and city which they defile. As the Psalmist says again:—"The Lord shall swallow them up in his wrath, and the fire shall devour them." Psalm xxi. 9. See also Mal. iv. 1, 2.

No doubt, sudden as will be this reverse to the wicked, there will yet be a method in the Divine procedure. Their destruction will not be a momentary thing; and so we read of the tares being *gathered in bundles* before they are burned. But that the event will be a complete clearing of Jerusalem and its territory from the presence of the wicked, is plainly asserted in the parable; nor is it less plainly implied in the following language of the Prophet Isaiah:—"It shall come to pass, that he that is left in Zion, and he that remaineth in Jerusalem, shall be called holy, even every one that is written among the living in Jerusalem; when the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and shall have purged the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof, by the spirit of judgment, and by the spirit of burning." Isaiah iv. 3—4. See vol. i. pp. 346, 349.

It need scarcely be added that with this recognition of the harvest commencing with judgment on the wicked, as an incidental feature, the inter-

pretation which makes it point to the issue of the present ~~Church dispensation~~, according to which the saints are first translated to glory, is utterly inadmissible. To apply to this case, the order observed in the parable should be reversed; so that, instead of the tares being gathered out from the wheat, we should read of the wheat being gathered out from the tares.

IV. Lastly, we come to *the happy result*, in the case of the wheat. It shall be gathered into the barn, *i. e.* the righteous remnant, thus represented, shall be collected, as to their true centre of rest, to Jerusalem, “the city of the great King.” And, here, the precision of Scripture is to be noticed. In the original, the term used to denote the *gathering* of the tares, imports that they are *culled out* (*συνλεγω*.) Whilst in regard to this gathering of the wheat, the word simply means, the *bringing together* of the precious grain (*συναγω*)—the mustering of “the congregation of the righteous” in which “sinners shall not stand.” Psalm i. 5. To this end, we read, “the Son of man shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect, (the spared Jewish people) from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.” Matt. xxiv. 31.

“Then,” according to the parable, “shall the

righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.” ver. 43. Nor must this similitude be considered of too glorious a character to comport with the earthly blessedness of the Jews; for in that typical song of triumph in the Old Testament, chanted over Israel’s destruction of Jabin’s hosts, we find it used in this very connection: “So let all thine enemies perish O LORD: but let them that love him be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might.” Judges v. 31.

Thus, the collateral information, furnished by the Gospel, shews that the figure of *harvest* includes the Divine dealings with the wicked as well as with the righteous; though no doubt the reference principally intended is to the latter. Nor would it be congruous, after the previous mention of the 144,000 as a “first fruits,” if the burden of the harvest scene related not to the full ingathering of the correlative body—the saved nation. And this may be inferred from the context immediately succeeding; of which the burden is as emphatically, indeed exclusively, that of *judgment*.

The English reader will perhaps think, that, as in Joel iii. 13, 14, the whole double metaphor of harvest and vintage is employed *judicially*; so it ought to be here. But, in regard to the passage in Joel, it is to be observed, that, in both the Septuagint

and Syriac versions, the translation is not “the harvest,” but ‘*the vintage is ripe.*’ And Bishop Horsley, of known celebrity as a critic, argues that as the original Hebrew term, notwithstanding its etymology, is capable of this signification, so, occurring as it does in Joel, without the specific addition, which it has elsewhere when the gathering of corn or wheat is intended, (see Isaiah xvii. 5, 11,) such signification ought to be preferred. Upon the point generally before us, the learned Prelate adds: “It is true the burning of the tares in our Saviour’s parable (Matt. xiii.) is a work of judgment, and of the time of harvest, previous to the binding of the sheaves; but it is an accidental adjunct of the business, not the harvest itself. I believe the harvest is never primarily and in itself an image of vengeance.”*

Of course, the reader will have perceived, that, in this imagery, nothing is imported concerning a judgment of *the dead*. Such will come in due place; but to introduce it here is only to complicate those aspects of the subject which the Spirit of God keeps distinct.

Ver. 17. *And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven.*] This angel’s appearance is evidently to recall to the mind the chief Personage of the vision—the Son of man. He presides over both harvest and vintage; but

* Horsley’s Biblical Criticism, vol. ii., p. 194. Ed. 1844. Longman.

as he had already been presented in person, in one connection, it suffices now, for the other, that he be represented by one of his ministering agents. Therefore, also, as the Lord himself comes from heaven, his agent issues from “the temple in heaven.” Upon the latter phrase, see chap. xi. 19.

He also having a sharp sickle.] Though a subordinate agent, yet, as representing the Lord Jesus, this angel carries the same ensign, a sharp sickle, suitable to the work of *vintage*, now about to be engaged in.

Ver. 18. *And another angel came out from the altar, which had power over fire.*] As this angel, like his fellow, in ver. 15, in relation to the harvest, gives the signal for the vintage to begin, so, from the same earthly point of observation, the temple, he issues forth; only, from the appurtenance of the altar being specified, it may be designed that we should recognize in what ensues, the invoked vengeance of the souls under the altar in the fifth seal. Perhaps, indeed, we should also see, in this angel, the Heavenly functionary of chap. viii. 3, who presides at the altar, exhibiting the cries of the persecuted saints as reaching the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. And, as he is there represented symbolizing the Divine answer, by filling his censer with *fire of the altar*, which he casts into the earth; so, he is now described as the angel “which had power over fire”—and this

view is favored still more by the original, which is literally, ‘*which had authority over the fire.*’

And cried with a loud voice to him that had the sharp sickle, saying, Thrust in thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth ; for her grapes are fully ripe.] Thus, the signal is given for beginning the operations of the *vintage*, as before, for those of harvest ; and the same reason is announced, the maturity of the fruit.

Ver. 19. *And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God.]* As we have seen from other Scriptures, the image of harvest which has preceded, involves the judgment of Jewish apostates ; but it is only *incidentally*. Hence it may be that, unequivocally to convey this feature of the future, and especially in its wider aspect, as affecting the Antichristian nations, the scene of the vintage is now employed, the import of which is purely retributive. That the subject of it will be the apostate Jews in the first instance cannot be doubted. The responsibility of having been God’s vineyard—“His pleasant plant,” (Isa. v. 7) will have belonged to them. They were planted a “noble vine, wholly a right seed,” but now they will have become unto the great Husbandman, “the degenerate plant of a strange vine.” Jer. ii. 21. Accordingly, judgment is denounced upon them ; and in keeping with its

tremendous import, here depicted, Jerusalem, like a disconsolate mother, is thus represented bemoaning her condition:—"The Lord hath trodden under foot all my mighty men in the midst of me: he hath called an assembly against me to crush my young men. The Lord hath trodden the virgin, the daughter of Judah, as in a wine-press." Lam. i. 15. But these sufferings of Jerusalem's corrupt children will not exempt her persecuting enemies from a similar portion; and so she is brought forward exclaiming in this same chapter:—"All mine enemies have heard of my trouble: they are glad that thou hast done it: thou wilt bring the day that thou hast called (proclaimed), and they shall be like unto me. Let all their wickedness come before thee; and do unto them as thou hast done unto me for all my transgressions: for my sighs are many, and my heart is faint." Ver. 21, 22. Answering to this then, as well as to Judah's punishment, is the import of the vintage-scene before us. The Antichristian nations, also, shall be gathered as grapes into the wine-fat, to be trodden by the Lord. The probability, indeed, is, that they are specifically intended by "*the vine of the earth*," even as the Antichrist is designated "*the man of the earth*."* For, in the song of Moses, we have parties thus described: "Their vine is of the vine of Sodom, and of the

* Psalm x. 18.

fields of Gomorrah ; their grapes are grapes of gall, their clusters are bitter : their wine is the poison of dragons, and the cruel venom of asps." And these parties do not seem to be Israel, but their "*enemies*." Such term is the nearest antecedent to the description in question. See Deut. xxxii. 31—33. When we remember, also, that the universally corrupting influence of Babylon is, in this very book, compared to wine,—" *the wine of the wrath of her fornication*"—a similitude not wanting in application to the foregoing comparison of the wicked cities of the plain, we ought to be prepared for the image of the vintage assuming a Gentile aspect.

With this comprehensive view of the vintage the other scriptures agree, in which such image is employed. For example, in the Prophet Joel, already referred to, where it is said, "the press is full, the fats overflow," the verse immediately preceding treats of the gathering of the heathen for judgment, to the valley of Jehoshaphat ; and, in the clause following, continuing the allusion, we read :—"For their wickedness is great. Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision :"
or of *threshing*, as it is in the margin. Chap. iii. 12—14. Again, with a similar reference both before and after to vengeance on the Antichristian nations, the Lord thus commissions Jeremiah :—"Therefore prophesy thou against them all these

words, and say unto them, The Lord shall roar from on high, and utter his voice from his holy habitation; he shall mightily roar upon his habitation; he shall give a shout, as they that tread the grapes, against all the inhabitants of the earth." Jer. xxv. 30.

In the Prophet Isaiah, also, where the avenging march of the Lord from Edom is the subject of contemplation, and the comparison employed is that he is like unto one "that treadeth in the wine-fat," we find him immediately appropriating the image:—"I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with me: for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment." And, hereupon, the cause of his prosecuting this terrible career is added:—"For the day of vengeance is in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed is come." Isaiah lxiii. 3, 4. Now, of course, as the "redeemed" here consist of Israel, the parties upon whom the vengeance falls are their enemies—the oppressing Gentiles. Again, the same event is rehearsed in chap. xix. of this book; indeed, the vision is the counterpart of that presented in Isaiah: the Lord Jesus, in his triumphant progress against his enemies, being the subject of it:—"Out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of

iron.” Here, again, the *nations* are introduced as undergoing the Divine judgment. But the sentence is imperfect till we read on :—“ And he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.” Rev. xix. 15.

Thus, we see the wide import of the vintage-scene before us, and that it involves in turn the oppressing Gentile as well as the corrupt Jew.

Ver. 20. *And the winepress was trodden without the city.*] Lepers, and other parties, to whom uncleanness attached, were, of old, put without the camp. For the same reason, also, it would appear, the bodies of the sin-offerings were carried thither and burned.* And this dishonor, as the Apostle writes, the Lord Jesus—the real victim, underwent, when He “ suffered without the gate of the city.” Heb. xiii. 11, 12. Accordingly, on this occasion of the slaughter of the wicked—to provide against Jerusalem being defiled by their blood—the winepress, the seat of destruction, is appointed without the city. And so Calvary, whereon the Son of God was crucified, shall yet witness an effusion of human blood—how dreadful and unparalleled the next clause teaches :

And blood came out of the winepress even unto the horse-bridles, by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs.] That the earth must literally flow with blood, at this awful crisis, may

* Lev. xvi. 27.

be easily conceived from the extensive carnage which will ensue, and which is elsewhere enlarged on. Thus, immediately following the allusion to the vintage, in chap. xix. of this book, we have another vision illustrating the details:—"And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come, and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God; that ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great." ver. 17, 18. See also Ezek. xxxix. 17—20, and verses 9—11, whence it appears that of this awful field of battle it will take Israel seven months to bury the dead, and seven years to burn the spoil of the weapons of war.

Again, in the Prophet Isaiah, we read:—"Come near, ye nations, to hear; and hearken, ye people; let the earth hear, and all that is therein: the world, and all things that come forth of it. For the indignation of the Lord is upon all nations, and his fury upon all their armies: he hath utterly destroyed them, he hath delivered them to the slaughter. Their slain also shall be cast out, and their stink shall come up out of their carcases, and the mountains shall be melted with their

blood. For my sword shall be bathed in heaven : behold, it shall come down upon Idumea and upon the people of my curse, to judgment : for the Lord hath a sacrifice in Bozrah, and a great slaughter in the land of Idumea : and their land shall be soaked with blood, and their dust made fat with fatness. For it is the day of the Lord's vengeance, and the year of recompenses for the controversy of Zion." Isaiah xxxiv. 1—8. In this last description, the scene of carnage, is the land of Idumea, or Edom, from the capital of which (Bozrah) our Lord is seen victoriously advancing in chap. lxiii. This mountainous region, therefore, will, no doubt, compose part of the wine-press here pourtrayed. The valley of Jehoshaphat, from what we have already seen, must also be included. And, as we read elsewhere, (in connexion with what is called, "the battle of that great day of God Almighty,") of the kings of the earth, and of the whole world being gathered "together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Amageddon,"* — *i. e.* the place of Megiddo,†—perhaps we are thus furnished with the several localities, whence the space of the 1600 furlongs, or two hundred miles—the estimated extent of the land of Palestine—will be inundated with the blood of the slain. As to its coming "even unto the horse-bridles," we are to

* Rev. xvi. 14—16.

† See also Hosea i. 11.

remember that in the East, from the caparison of the war-horse, were wont to be suspended numerous ornamental trappings, of which the bridle was not without its share. Such, accordingly, in the scene before us, may be conceived to reach so low as to become ensanguined by the tread of the horses over the field of carnage; and this would be a literal verification of the Spirit's language. Perhaps, however, it is simply employed as the idiom to denote a scene of extensive slaughter (though this, undoubtedly, will surpass all others); for thus the same terms substantially occur in ancient writers. Bishop Newton quotes the Jerusalem Talmud, as recording that, at the destruction of the city of Bitter, where so many Jews perished, "*the horses waded in blood up to the nostrils.*" And "Silius Italicus," he adds, speaking of Annibal's descent into Italy, "useth a like expression, of *the bridles flowing with much blood.*"*

* Newton on the Prophecies, vol. iii, pp. 267, 268.

CHAPTER XV.

SECTION FIRST.

Verses 1—4.

1 And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvellous, seven angels having the seven last plagues; for in them is filled up the wrath of God.

2 And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire: and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, *and* over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God.

3 And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous *are* thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true *are* thy ways, thou King of saints.

4 Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for *thou only art* holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest.

As already observed, the contents of the three preceding chapters are of a parenthetic character. After the sounding of the seventh Trumpet, importing the exhaustion, at length, of the Divine chastisement upon the Jews, and the coming retribution upon the Gentiles, their oppressors,* the Spirit had proceeded to render out in detail the dealings of God with the latter. To this end the temple of God was represented as opened in heaven, (chap. xi. 19,) whence, as we see, in verse 6, of this chapter, the avenging angels,

* Compare chap. x. 7 with chap. xi. 15—18.

with their seven vials of wrath, issue forth. But, just at that point, a digression ensued, to fill up explicitly what had before been only implied; and to hint summarily at the events ready to succeed. Such matter being thus disposed of, the original rehearsal is now resumed; and at verse 5, of this chapter, the continuation of the subject is obvious. It is effected, however, by a sort of overlapping of the parts, which is discernible in these foregoing verses. For whereas, at the sounding of the seventh trumpet is contemplated “the time of God’s wrath” upon the nations, and the attainment of certain saints to resurrection blessedness; here we have, answering thereto, the executive of that wrath—the seven vial angels; and just as they issue forth, a vision evidently of risen saints standing before God. Indeed, the song which they sing is exactly correspondent in import with that which, in chap. xi. 17, 18, celebrates the establishment of Messiah’s kingdom. We cannot doubt, therefore, but that the thread of narration, which was then suddenly dropped, we here meet with again—the two chapters running into each other; and, at this stage, it will be profitable to the reader to peruse them consecutively.

Ver. 1. *And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvellous.*] Two signs seen in heaven had been spoken of before; first, the sun-clad

woman, (chap. xii. 1)—symbol we considered of the Jewish nation, dignified as she is in the Divine purpose ; secondly, the great red dragon, standing before the woman with malignant intent,* representing Satan, and his designs against that people so honoured of God. In relation to these foregoing visions, and, as it were, conducting the main line of rehearsal of the future with a guiding uniformity, “*another sign*” is here exhibited to the Apostle, and its great and marvellous import is explained by what follows.

Seven angels having the seven last plagues ; for in them is filled up the wrath of God.] Here are the prime ministers of judgment, who, by successive strokes, will vindicate the chosen people of God against their Dragon foe, and his earthly satellites. They are not *the* seven angels seen in chap. viii. 3, to whom are committed the trumpet woes ; for, in their designation, the article, indicative of this, is not found. They are, then, seven other heavenly agents, who wait upon the further execution of the Divine behests. With their number, as in the case of the trumpet angels, corresponds the series of plagues which they inflict—*seven*, a number expressive of completeness.

* Ver. 3. The word here, and in ver. 1, the reader will observe, though translated “*wonder*,” is the same in the original with that which is employed in this chapter, “*sign*.” Indeed, the margin so renders it.

See Lev. xxvi. 21. The plagues are also the seven *last* plagues, because, as it is added, "*in them is filled up the wrath of God ;*" i.e. herein the Divine anger finds full vent against the Antichristian adversaries of Him and His people, and thus—as was announced would take place under the sounding of the seventh trumpet—"the mystery of God" becomes "*finished ;*" the hiding of His face from Israel ceases ; and the proud Gentiles are brought into complete subjection.

Ver. 2. *And I saw as it were a sea of glass.*] This seems evidently a recurrence to the imagery of chap. iv., where the throne of God is seen in the heavens, surrounded by the twenty-four elders, (representing the glorified saints of past dispensations,) and the four living creatures in the midst (representing the Church, the body of Christ). "Before the throne," says the Apostle, "there was a sea of glass like unto crystal." (chap. iv. 6.) It did not *then* appear to be occupied by parties standing on it. The time for this, we now see, had not arrived. Resurrection glory indeed was represented as already realized by others—those just cited. But such happy consummation to them only initiates the events of the day of the Lord, whose rehearsal John is caught up to behold ; and as yet the further complement of glorified ones, whose station is

appointed on the sea of glass before the throne, have not run their martyr's career. During the progress of the Revelation, as at the opening of the fifth seal, some of them are seen in the place of the dead; but their number is to be augmented by the martyrdom of others; and, not until then, is vengeance to come upon their enemies. Meanwhile, however, the position in glory, prepared and reserved for them, awaits their translation to it. And now, at length, the seventh trumpet having sounded, they are seen to occupy it.

In that the sea of glass is "mingled with fire," we should perhaps recognize the fierce character of the persecution through which they shall have passed. Or, probably, this combination may be designed to suggest that here is the heavenly antitype of "the molten" (or brazen) "sea" in Solomon's temple, (1 Kings vii. 23,) wherein the Aaronic Priests were wont to wash, as a preparation for their sacred service. The object of the scene before us being to set forth the higher order of Priests, constituted of these risen saints, this ensign of their sacerdotal functions is not wanting.

And them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, (and over his mark,) and over the number of his name, stand upon the sea of glass.]* Such is the description of those who

* This clause ought to be omitted, as an interpolation, see page 265.

stand on the sea of glass. As already anticipated, they are risen saints. This we gather from their character of victors. Those of the Seven Churches who *overcome*, (it is the same word in the original,) and the prophets and saints of chap. xi. 18, all of whom, it is submitted, are contemplated in chap. xii. 11, will constitute the distinguished band. Indeed—besides the inference already derived from the assigned position on the sea of glass—it is the identification of the scene as including these parties which shows it to be a resurrection one; for the portion of the former, let us remember, (the victors of the Seven Churches,) is manifestly resurrection glory, including the action of “the morning star,” in the smiting of the nations, which smiting is now about to ensue under the seven vials; and as to the latter, (the prophets and saints of chap. xi. 18,) for *their* resurrection, (signified to take place under the seventh trumpet, comprising the outpouring of the vials,) we can find no other place, as we look throughout the series, than in this preliminary vision. Whilst herein, the introduction of such is very apposite, and well answers, in point of speedy event, to the congratulatory note of chap. xiv. 13. No doubt, both parties are identical with those whose resurrection is expressly mentioned a little farther on, in chap. xx. 4. To the Beast, (the Antichrist,) it will have been given to

make war with, and to “*overcome*” them, in their mortal nature, and so they shall be beheaded. But still in that they shall not have “worshipped him, nor his image, nor have received his mark”—their loyalty to their Divine Master being unshaken alike by the blandishments and terrors of the enemy—they shall get the real victory or overcome (it is the same term in the original) in fortitude of spirit;* and at last they shall completely triumph over him or *out* of his hand (the preposition being ἐκ not ἐπι) in their rising from the dead. This event formally rehearsed in chap. xx. is here implied, which constitutes the difference between the two visions.

Having the harps of God.] In a former vision we have had “harps” mentioned as part of the equipment for heavenly worship. See on chap. v. 8. Here the expression is “*harps of God*,” which seems to convey the idea of the bliss which animates this company being *divine*. In fact, they have now entered into “the joy of their Lord,” as participants in the accomplishment of His counsels; and how fully they appreciate the glorious distinction is indicated by their hymn of praise which follows.

Ver. 3. *And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God.*] From the character of victors which belongs to the parties singing, we

* Rev. xii. 11.

may determine that of the two Scriptures thus entitled, Deut. xxxii., and Ex. xv., the latter is that here referred to, as it breathes throughout the corresponding tone of triumph. Its introduction here is also instructive, as shewing that Israel's memorable deliverance at the Red Sea was typical of that final one which yet awaits them, when another mighty Pharoah and his hosts, having subserved the Divine purpose, shall be consigned to a similar destruction; and the analogy is still more remarkable, as in this case also, there will have been an outpouring of successive plagues upon the enemy, ushering in the great catastrophe. The inspired strain of the song would, of itself, suggest that there was this reference to the future. For, like the tenor of all the prophecies, it celebrates Israel's settlement in their land, as coincident with the establishment of Messiah's everlasting kingdom. Thus in fact the song closes:—"Thou shalt bring them (Israel) in, and plant them in the mountain of thine inheritance, in the place, O Lord, which thou hast made for thee to dwell in; in the sanctuary, O Lord, which thy hands have established. The Lord shall reign for ever and ever." Ex. xv. 17, 18.

May it not be, moreover, to signify that this consummation was reserved for achievement by the Lord himself, that Moses is here entitled

“*the servant of the Lord?*” For, it is remarkable that this precise title was first affixed to his name in the recital of his death by the Holy Ghost, before Israel entered the promised land, when Joshua the type of Jesus as the MAN OF WAR (the personage of the song,) was appointed to be his successor, who accordingly installed the people into their temporary occupation of the land.*

The further association of this song with the Lord Jesus, as “the song of the Lamb” (for, I submit, it is the same song, which is thus denominated, only epitomized) is confirmatory of the foregoing suggestion; for our Lord’s title, THE LAMB, is significant, not merely of atoning virtue, but of redemptive might; and the latter, (though at the same time implying the former) is evidently the idea here, so that it answers to the “man of war,” in Exodus xv.

Saying, Great and marvellous are thy works.] Thus begins the song just described—an epitome of Moses’ song; and we have only to compare the two in order to see the unity of theme which pervades them. For example, in this opening clause of the one before us, is commended to our notice the imposing character of the Divine judgments impending under the seven vials; the very aspect of which in the angels’ hands, had

* Compare Deu. xxxiv. 5, with Deu. iii. 26—28

been described in corresponding words, (ver. 1.) "*a sign great and marvellous*;" and the same is one prominent feature in the song of Moses; so that "*doing wonders*" is therein recited as the climax of Jehovah's attributes with which none can compare. Ex. xv. 11.

Lord God Almighty.] This three-fold title we have met with twice already, in the recorded adoration of the heavenly worshippers. And now from meeting it again, in the present connexion, perhaps we should gather further knowledge of its import. It seems then to be here ascribed to God, as at length consummating, by all-subduing power, his revealed purposes. Nor is this view sustained only by its use in this book of the Apocalypse, the rehearsal, as it is, of Divine *actings* rather than *speakings*. A further and independent proof is supplied by God himself on the occasion of his assuring Moses, which he does twice over, that, "*with a strong hand*," he was about to redeem Israel out of Egypt. For then, after citing the two names, "God Almighty," by which He had been before manifested, he emphatically supplements them by the addition "LORD:"—"Then the Lord said unto Moses, Now, shalt thou see what I will do to Pharoah: for with a strong hand shall he let them go, and with a strong hand shall he drive them out of his land. And God spake unto Moses, and

said unto him, I am the Lord: And I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of God Almighty, but by my name Jehovah was I not known to them." Ex. vi. 1—3. Here we have severally, the very names before us; and the discrimination of their respective meanings is sufficiently implied, so that their combination in this, and the other triumphant songs of the Apocalypse, contemplates, we cannot doubt, *the actual putting forth of Divine power to accomplish its behests.*

Perhaps, in regard to this last reference in Exodus, the reader may be perplexed at the allegation that to the Patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, God was not known as the LORD, or JEHOVAH; whereas, in Gen. xv. 6, it is said of Abraham, that "he believed in the LORD" (JEHOVAH.) And again, in. ver. 7, that God said to him; "I am the LORD" (JEHOVAH). This perplexity is at once removed by the consideration that it is a sensibly experimental knowledge of Him under this name, which God denies to have been possessed by the Patriarchs. The demonstration of his *self-existence*, and the dependence on Him, (and therefore utter impotence without Him) of all creaturehood, which the name Jehovah imports, had not been given till the Exodus, or deliverance of Israel commenced. Accordingly, in consonance with this, we find

it declared by God himself, “The Egyptians shall know that I am JEHOVAH, *when I stretch forth my hand upon Egypt.*” Ex. vii. 5. Indeed there is one text in the Psalms which thus elucidates the passage in question, (Ex. vi. 3.) the moment it is put into juxta-position: “The LORD (JEHOVAH) *is known by the judgment which he executeth.*” Psalm ix. 16. After this manner, then, (though recognized indeed by faith,) was He not known to the Patriarchs.

Just and true are thy ways.] The ways of God are those dispensations of his, whereby he comes into manifestation; “his footsteps,” as it were—the term by which the Psalmist varies the expression, (Psalm lxxvii. 19.) and sometimes, as he adds, they are “not known.” And again, he exclaims, “O Lord, how great are thy works! and thy thoughts are very deep. A brutish man knoweth not; neither doth a fool understand this.” Psalm xcii. 5, 6. Perhaps indeed a distinction is herein intended between the “*works*” of God, and His “*thoughts*,” the latter having a closer affinity to what are called His *ways*, as it is said elsewhere: “He made known His ways unto Moses, His acts unto the children of Israel.” Psalm ciii. 7. But no doubt the *ways* of God, here spoken of, (*i. e.*, in the text of the Apocalypse,) comprise his whole procedure; and as Israel’s relation to the nations is the matter now at

issue, probably, the Divine *methods* for the adjustment of this are especially contemplated under the characteristics added—“*just and true.*”

This seems to accord with the general subject, as we have seen, of Moses' song, in Exodus xv. ; whilst it forcibly calls to mind, the celebration, in his other song, of the Divine perfections of Israel's God: “He is the Rock, his work is perfect; for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is He. Deut. xxxii. 4. Thus also it may be designed to intimate that at length the time has come for the realization by Israel, of their long expected blessings, the performance by God, as Zacharias expresses it, of the mercy promised to their fathers, and the remembering his holy covenant, “the oath which he swear unto their father Abraham,” (Luke i. 72, 73; Psalm xcvi. 1—3; Psalm cv. 6—10,), a consummation, we know, which—as the nations of the earth throng to the Holy City to render their appointed worship—will inspire them with a true appreciation of the Divine character. The whole strain of the 100th Psalm is Israel's invocation to them, to praise God upon this very ground. For, let the reader observe the variation of person, as the Psalm proceeds:—“Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all ye lands. Serve the Lord with

gladness: come before his presence with singing. Know *ye* that the Lord he is God: it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; *we* are his people, and the sheep of his pasture." ver. 3. Again—all lands being still addressed—"Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him and bless his name. For the Lord is good, his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations." ver. 4, 5. It is only necessary to add that the mercy and truth here celebrated obviously appertain to *Israel*, according to the language of the Prophet:—"Thou wilt perform *the truth* to Jacob, and the mercy to Abraham, which thou hast sworn unto our father's from the days of old." Micah vii. 20.

Thou King of saints (nations).] This alteration of the text, as adopted by almost all Editors, not only makes it harmonize with another Scripture, (Jer. x. 7,) but also preserves the coherence of the subject—the vindication of the Divine purpose touching Israel.

In like manner, a similar title of God, elsewhere, importing his paramount authority over mankind at large, is associated with his complete redemption of the covenant people. Thus, in Psalm xlvii., after the recognition of God, as "a great King over all the earth," Israel are taught to add: "He shall subdue the people under us, and the

nations under our feet. He shall choose our inheritance for us, the excellency of Jacob whom he loved." Ver. 2—4. It is probable also that our Lord is here confessed as "*King of nations*," to oppugn the pretensions of the Antichrist, now about to be deposed from his impious ascendancy.

At all events, if, with some copies, the title "*King of saints*" be admitted, it is clear that it relates not to the saints of this dispensation; for to them appertains the distinction of being "joint-heirs" with the King, not his subjects, which latter relation is confined to the Jews and the nations. Nor is it ever said that Christ shall reign *over* the saints, but expressly that they "*shall reign with him*," (2 Tim. ii. 12); and his headship over all things is, not so much inclusive of them, as *unto* them—as we read: "Head over all things *to the Church* which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all." Eph. i. 22, 23.

Ver. 4. *Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name?*] Such is the contemplation of the effect of God's righteous judgments as just cited; and it appears to be a response to the proclamation of the everlasting Gospel, in chap. xiv. 7. Between this and Moses' song, also, the parallelism is observable:—"The people shall hear, and be afraid: sorrow shall take hold on the inhabitants of Palestina. Then the dukes

of Edom shall be amazed; the mighty men of Moab, trembling shall take hold upon them; all the inhabitants of Canaan shall melt away." Exodus xv. 14, 15.

We see further from Psalm xxii., (the utterance of our blessed Lord on the cross,) that this was among the aspects of the joy set before him, which refreshed his sinking spirit in the hour of agony; for it is there recited: "All the ends of the world shall remember, and turn unto the Lord. . . . For the kingdom is the Lord's: and he is the governor among the nations." Ver. 27, 28.

Thus, too, the inquiry after him by the Greeks, in the days of his flesh (earnest of this happy future) was an occasion to him of comfort, so that he could exclaim, in answer: "The hour is come, that the Son of Man should be glorified. Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." John xii. 23, 24.

And, as with the Lord himself, this harvest of an ingathered world was associated, we perceive, with his humiliation unto death; so, doubtless, it will be, with the heavenly choir who celebrate this festive scene. The worthiness of the Lamb that was slain will mingle with their thoughts as they sing, not less than in the actual strains of their glorified brethren represented in former visions.

For thou only art holy.] According to the most approved editions of the original, the word which is employed in this clause to denote the Divine character (*ἅγιος*) conveys not more the idea of *holiness*, than of *graciousness, benignity*. In the Septuagint, it is used as answerable to a Hebrew term which signifies *mercy*; for example, “the sure *mercies* of David.” Isa. lv. 3. Accordingly, the ascription of this attribute to God in the song before us, occurring, as it does, by way of reason for the universal glorying of His name, just anticipated, may especially relate to *the mercy and truth* of which *Israel* are now about to be manifestly the subjects; and so the unity of theme in this introduction to the outpouring of wrath upon their enemies, becomes further commended to us. See Isaiah lix. 16—18.

For all nations shall come and worship before thee.] This prolonged note of happy anticipation concerning the future, indeed, part of the foregoing clause also, is contained in Psalm lxxxvi., where, after a like adoring contemplation of the Divine works, setting the true Jehovah above all comparison, the Psalmist adds: “All nations whom thou hast made shall come and worship before thee, O Lord; and shall glorify thy name.” ver. 9. The same precise prospect is rehearsed by our blessed Lord in Psalm xxii., and in almost identical words: “All the kindreds of

the nations shall worship before thee.” (ver. 27) This will be one feature of the Millennial dispensation, when the restored temple in Jerusalem shall be God’s “house of prayer for all people,” who, according to another prophecy, “shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of Hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles..” See Isaiah lvi. 7, and Zech. xiv. 16.

For thy judgments are made manifest.] The word here translated “judgments” is often employed to denote the pleadings of a party in a court of justice to vindicate his rightful cause. By the fearful judgments then which follow under the outpouring of the vials, will God *plead* His cause and that of Israel, against the Antichristian nations. And herein do the heavenly choir before us descry one grand means which will conduce to the blessed spectacle just contemplated—the prevalence of true religion throughout the world. Not indeed that mere inflictions of suffering can convert mankind, but that amidst such demonstrations, that “verily there is a God that judges the earth,” universal attention will be arrested to the accompanying *overtures* of his grace.

That this humbling process to break down the proud spirit of independence in the human heart, and which is yet to put forth its desperate energy, is a necessary preliminary in the Divine counsels to the regeneration of the world, is insisted on in

Scripture. Thus, in the prophet Isaiah, we read : “ Let favor be shewed to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness.” Here is affirmed the failure of any dispensation of grace like the present to reduce mankind to allegiance to God. Nor will the heavy chastisement, before their eyes, of the covenant people Israel, have this effect. Hence, the prophet exclaims : “ Lord, when thy hand is lifted up, they will not see.” But the true prescription is at hand :—“ When thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness.” Isaiah xxvi. 9—11. And what have we, in the vision before us, but a celebration of this happy issue on the eve of attainment, the antecedent judgments being ready to descend—yea, even now, to the eye of faith, running their course—“ for thy judgments are made manifest.”

March 30

to the

CHAPTER XV.

SECTION SECOND.

Verses 5—8.

5 And after that I looked, and, behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened :

6 And the seven angels came out of the temple, having the seven plagues, clothed in pure and white linen, and having their breasts girded with golden girdles.

7 And one of the four beasts gave unto the seven angels seven golden vials full of the wrath of God, who liveth for ever and ever.

8 And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God, and from his power; and no man was able to enter into the temple, till the seven plagues of the seven angels were fulfilled.

Ver. 5. *And after that I looked, and behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened.*] This vision, as incidentally noticed already, links on, in the way of direct recital, with the close of chap. xi. (see on chap. xi. 19), where, immediately after the sounding of the seventh trumpet, we similarly read that “the temple of God was opened in heaven.” The variation introduced into the phraseology now—a combination not met with elsewhere in Scripture,—confirms what has been already suggested, that the temple alluded to, in both cases, is the heavenly abode of the Divine presence—the Archetype, according to which every successive symbol of God’s dwelling on earth was constructed, the Testimony first, then the Tabernacle, lastly the Temple. See Ex. xvi. 34; xxxiii. 7; *xxv. 40; 1 Chron. xxviii. 12—19.

Ver. 6. *And the seven angels came out of the temple, having the seven plagues.*] These heavenly functionaries are only denominated in ver. 1, “seven angels.” Now, however, to define them as parties already mentioned, the article is employed—“the seven angels.” See on ver. 1. Their issuing out of the temple—fresh, as it were,

from the Divine presence—imports their being commissioned of God to engage in the work now before them.

Clothed in pure and white linen.] This is the emblem of spotless purity, such as God requires of His servants. Thus, when the High Priest of old entered into the Holiest of all—the presence-chamber, as it were, of Jehovah—he was required to be clad in his white linen garments. Lev. xvi. 4. And so in some of the angelic manifestations in human form recorded in the Old Testament, the same white apparel is noticed. See Ezek. ix. 2; Dan. x. 5.

And having their breasts girded with golden girdles.] Perhaps this further investment of their persons is designed to signify not only their readiness for service, but also the sacred dignity of their office. For thus, in order to the recognition, by Israel, of the honor put upon their High Priest,—whereas, on his entrance into the Holiest of all, he was only clad in his white linen garments,—upon his presenting himself before the congregation, he wore, by Divine command, those that were “for glory and beauty,” whereof the curious girdle of the ephod (of gold) was a distinguishing ornament. See Lev. xvi. 23, 24. Our Lord himself also appears invested with the same in the opening vision of this book.

Ver. 7. *And one of the four beasts (living*

creatures) gave unto the seven angels seven golden vials full of the wrath of God.] As the living creatures represent the glorified saints of this dispensation—"the body of Christ"—the circumstance of one of them serving out to the appointed ministers of judgment, severally, the full-charged emblems of their office, plainly indicates that even in this preliminary stage of the process, before the Lord personally appears, they—"the saints, shall judge the world." See 1 Cor. vi. 2. The action here is analogous to the successive cry of all the living creatures, "come and see," which ushers in the judgments of the seals. Ch. vi.

Answering to "the wrath of God," said to be poured out into the cup of his indignation, (chap. xiv. 10) the *φιάλη*, or vial, is now introduced, each angel having one. And, as we have seen, (ch. v. 8) "golden vials" (the same word) employed as receptacles of the prayers of the saints; doubtless, their use on this occasion, as "full of the wrath of God," should suggest that in their outpouring, now about to ensue, such prayers have availed as at least one moving cause. See vol. i. p. 296.

Who liveth for ever and ever.] This description of God is by way of amplification of His wrath just spoken of. The greatest of men are but transient creatures, and, therefore, God says to Israel, "Who art thou, that thou shouldest be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of

man which shall be made as grass?" Isaiah li. 12. But, as to Himself, he now repeats that "he liveth for ever and ever;" (chap. i. 6,) as though to awaken the seasonable response:—"Who knoweth the power of thine anger? even according to thy fear, so is thy wrath." Ps. xc. 11.

Ver. 8. *And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God, and from his power.*]

At the giving of the Law, we read that "Mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire: and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace." Exodus xix. 18. This was amongst the demonstrations of the holy, sin-avenging character of God, and accordingly the effect upon all the people was that they "trembled." Exodus xix. 16. So terrible was the sight that even Moses said:—"I exceedingly fear and quake." Heb. xii. 21.

As the preliminary to judgment, also, "the glory of the Lord" was wont to be manifested like devouring fire, (see Exodus xxiv. 17,) as on the occasion of Israel's murmuring against Moses and Aaron. Thus it is written, that "when the congregation was gathered against Moses and against Aaron, that they looked towards the tabernacle of the congregation; and, behold, the cloud covered it, and the glory of the Lord appeared." Numbers xvi. 42. And the sequel immediately follows, ere Moses could interpose,

of wrath going out from the Lord — “the plague was begun among the people.” Ver. 47. Similarly, then, in the vision before us, the temple, whence the vial angels issue, wears an *adverse* aspect. God, as it were, looks out from it, as of old from the pillar of cloud when he “troubled the hosts of the Egyptians.” Exodus xiv. 24. See also Isaiah vi., where the house (*i.e.* the temple) is “filled with smoke,” as an accompaniment of the commission of judgment confided to the Prophet.

And no man was able to enter into the temple, till the seven plagues of the seven angels were fulfilled.] On various occasions, in the history of Israel, we read of Moses “entering into the tabernacle,”—coming into the Divine presence to intercede for the guilty people,—and God was entreated of him, so as to turn from his anger. Exodus xxxii. 31—33; xxxiii. 9—12, &c. When, therefore, as in the passage before us, all entrance is debarred, for the time that the vial plagues are being poured out, we should perhaps gather that thus intimation is given of the inflexible resolve of God to inflict these coming plagues. No place shall be found, as it were, for moving an arrest of judgment. Elsewhere, to convey a similar idea in regard to Israel’s chastisement, the interposition of Moses and Samuel is supposed only to be declared abortive;—“Though Moses and Samuel

stood before me, yet my mind could not be toward this people : cast them out of my sight." Jer. xv. 1. See also Ezek. xiv. 14. And, again, the Divine inexorableness is signified by God's covering himself with a cloud (just like the foregoing vision of smoke filling the temple) :—"Thou hast covered thyself with a cloud, that our prayer should not pass through." Lam. iii. 44. A solemn admonition this to all who have ears to hear, not to abuse the Divine patience ! For when God once arises to judgment, neither will he be entreated, nor can he be resisted. And by this very consideration are the confederate nations, with their rulers—the parties upon whom the vial plagues shall come—urged to submit to God :—"Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron ; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel." Here is their impending ruin. But immediately ensues the exhortation :—"Be wise now, therefore, O ye kings ; be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little." Psalm ii. 9—12. Christian Reader ! shall we not, in this our day, realize and proclaim, both with our lives and lips, the closing note that follows—"Blessed are all they that put their trust in him ?"

CHAPTER XVI.

Verses 1—21.

1 And I heard a great voice out of the temple saying to the seven angels, Go your ways, and pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth.

2 And the first went, and poured out his vial upon the earth; and there fell a noisome and greivous sore upon the men which had the mark of the beast, and *upon* them which worshipped his image.

3 And the second angel poured out his vial upon the sea; and it became as the blood of a dead *man*: and every living soul died in the sea.

4 And the third angel poured out his vial upon the rivers and fountains of waters; and they became blood.

5 And I heard the angel of the waters say, Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and wast, and shalt be, because thou hast judged thus.

6 For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink; for they are worthy.

7 And I heard another out of the altar say, Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous *are* thy judgments.

8 And the fourth angel poured out his vial upon the sun; and power was given unto him to scorch men with fire.

9 And men were scorched with great heat, and blasphemed the name of God, which hath power over these plagues: and they repented not to give him glory.

10 And the fifth angel poured out his vial upon the seat of the beast; and his kingdom was full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues for pain,

11 And blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds.

12 And the sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates; and the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared.

13 And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs *come* out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet.

14 For they are the sprits of devils, working miracles, *which* go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty.

15 Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.

16 And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon.

17 And the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air; and there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the thirone, saying, It is done.

18 And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, *and* so great.

19 And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell: and great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath.

20 And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found.

21 And there fell upon men a great hail out of heaven, *every* stone about the weight of a talent: and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail; for the plague thereof was exceeding great.

IN entering upon the consideration of this third series of terrible judgments, it may be well to refer the reader to what has been already advanced, in regard to its relation to the two preceding series—the seals and the trumpets.* Of these several series of visions, the thread of recital, in the Apocalypse, consists; the other

* Vol. i. pp. 307—314.

visions being introduced as ancillary thereto, supplying details for the filling up of the subject. In the seals, we have the comprehensive aspect of the terrible day of the Lord, upon the corrupt Jews, and the apostate Gentiles, collectively. In the trumpets, we have the special aspect of that day upon the Jews—the parties with whom Divine justice will deal first.* And now, in the vials, we have the aspect of that day upon the Gentiles, their oppressors.

Ver. 1. *And I heard a great voice out of the temple saying to the seven angels, Go your ways, and pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth.*] This voice, initiating the outpouring of the vials, would seem to be the same with that which is heard at the close when all have been poured forth, and which is denominated—“a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne.” Ver 17. And the last clause of this fuller description, “*from the throne*,” leads to the identification of the voice with that of chap. i. 10, and chap. iv. 1, which is unquestionably the voice of the Lord Jesus. He, therefore, it is, who now commands the seven angels to their respective places, that the execution of the appointed judgments may, at once, begin. And as the issue is the redemption of Israel, probably we should

* Rom. ii. 9, 10.

further determine that this is the “voice of the Lord that rendereth recompense to his enemies,” of which the Prophet Isaiah speaks. For, immediately thereon, as we see in the context, the joyful event is introduced of Zion travailing and bringing forth her children. See Isaiah lxvi. 6—8.

As it will have been the land of Palestine that the trumpet visitations will affect, for the chastisements of the Jews, we should rather conclude that the scene of the vial plagues will be the earth as occupied by their Antichristian adversaries. But, we must remember, this will still involve Palestine, for, as yet, it is in the possession of the Antichrist, who may use it as the head quarters for his armies. If this appear inconsistent with the alleged exhaustion of Jewish suffering, under the trumpets, at least, at the hands of God, let it be borne in mind that, as in the case of Israel and the Egyptians of old, the Lord will know how to discriminate between his enemies and his friends. And, perhaps, in Psalm xci., and other Psalms of like import, wherein, amidst the most desolating judgments, is celebrated the preservation of a faithful people, the reference is to such discrimination, not merely between Jew and Jew, as under the trumpets, but between Jew and Gentile, as here, under the vials.

Ver 2. *And the first went, and poured out his*

vial upon the earth.] Whatever region of the globe is here concerned—(perhaps we cannot fix it within precise geographical limits)—the *land*, it appears, as distinct from the sea, rivers, &c., is the department upon which the first vial plague descends.

And there fell (or rather ensued) a noisome and grievous sore upon the men which had the mark of the beast, and upon them which worshipped his image.*] Here is the effect of the outpoured vial. It is like that from the ashes of the furnace, which Moses sprinkled of old toward heaven in the sight of Pharaoh, only then man and beast were smitten; whereas, here, the stroke is confined to *men*, even to the adherents of Antichrist. These parties, by whatever act of apostasy distinguished, shall now begin to taste the fruit of their blasphemous impiety. A festering sore shall fasten on their bodies, disgusting and tormenting. In the midst of their pride and self-sufficiency, such infliction will have its humiliating influence. It is written, in regard to the similar infliction of old upon the Egyptians, the “boils”—indeed, to describe them, the Septuagint employs the same Greek word which is here rendered “sores”—that, because of them, “the magicians could not stand before Moses.” Exodus ix. 11. With all their daring energy and resolution, augmented, doubtless, by

* Literally, *was*, (ἐγένετο.)

their previous success, these wicked ones were stricken down before the servant of God; their distempered limbs, we can imagine, refusing to do their office. 'So may it be with the adherents of the Antichrist in the last days. They shall be made to drink of the waters of the Divine jealousy, and be called from the pursuit of their impious projects, to the base employment of tending their angry sores, which shall not disappear moreover with the other plagues which follow, but co-exist. (See ver. 11.) If, as we may conceive, the ranks of the Antichrist still contain any Jewish apostates, no doubt they also shall come under this retribution; and herein, perhaps, the Divine threatening of Deut. xxviii., in the event of Israel's forsaking God, will find its fulfilment;—"The Lord will smite thee with the botch of Egypt." Ver 27. Again, "The Lord shall smite thee in the knees and in the legs with a sore botch that cannot be healed." Ver. 35. And it is observable that here, also, the word employed for *botch*, in the Septuagint, is the same with the original of *sore* in the Apocalypse.

Ver. 3. *And the second angel poured out his vial upon the sea.*] Adopting the same principle of interpretation here, as in the case of the trumpets,* we should consider that the sea affected by the vial of the second angel is still the Mediterranean or

* Chapter ix.

Great Sea. For to Gentile Antichristian regions, equally as to Palestine, it is adapted in no ordinary way to serve the ends of traffic and intercourse. We must again remember, also, that at this time Palestine is held in occupation by the Antichristian armies.

And it became as the blood of a dead man.] Here is the dreadful effect produced. In their harbours and along their coasts, wherever the briny element had been wont to yield its wholesome influence to the inhabitants, it now becomes a mass of blood, stagnant and putrescent. Nor is it that the sea merely assumes *this aspect*, though our rendering of the clause might denote such mitigated meaning. For the correct translation is, “it became blood, *as of a dead man.*” The note of similitude only belongs to the reference to the ~~human~~ subject, whose blood is known to be serous and thick, and no longer fluid as when living. With such matter as this sending forth its noxious exhalations, what a tainted atmosphere must ensue, and how pregnant with disease to all who inhale it! And as we have regarded the seals to be a condensed parallel of the trumpets and vials, may we not have here presented to us one more element, in detail, of that pestilence which is to succeed the career of war and famine. See chap. vi. 8; Mat. xxiv. 7.

And every living soul died in the sea.] That is, coextensive with the foregoing disastrous change

in their native élement, all the marine tribes of animals shall perish. But to human life, also, in the case of those navigating the sea, such change may be equally fatal.

Ver. 4. *And the third angel poured out his vial upon the rivers and fountains of waters.*] Thus, following the order of the trumpet plagues, (only here the disaster is not limited to a third part) the inland waters are next smitten—another conducting cause, it may be, to the pestilence already alluded to.

And they became blood.] In the case of the trumpet plagues the waters became bitter. Here, again, the effect is worse; the same as under the foregoing vial, they become *blood*. That the meaning is literal we see confirmed by ver. 6, where the wicked, having blood given them to drink, are said to be thus dealt with in the way of righteous retort, because of their having shed the blood of saints and of prophets. The manifest type of this is seen in God's dealings of old with Pharaoh and the Egyptians—precursors, as they were, of the Antichrist and his followers. See Ex. vii. 20.

Ver. 5. *And I heard the angel of the waters say.*] Some have argued from this expression that to angels are assigned a sort of presidency over the different elements of nature. But, probably, as in chap. xiv. 18, “the angel which had power over

fire” signified the angel of chap. viii. 3, who had filled his censer with fire of the altar;* so, here, “the angel of the waters” may mean simply, the vial angel who had power over the waters, as just described.

Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and wast, and shalt be, because thou hast judged thus.] Thus, this minister of judgment cannot discharge his office without uttering an ascription of praise to his Divine Master. And it accords with the response that shall be awakened in the breast of the Jewish saint under similar circumstances:—

“The righteous shall rejoice when he seeth the vengeance: he shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked. So that a man shall say, Verily there is a reward for the righteous: verily he is a God that judgeth in the earth.” Psalm lviii. 10, 11.

The burden of exultation, in both these cases, is the vindication at length of Jehovah’s character, as the Governor of the world, and the covenant God of his people Israel. His long forbearance with the wicked, and His chastisement of Israel, only just ended, will have seemed to cast a cloud over His glorious attributes. But now they shall be seen to shine forth in all their lustre, never more to be misconstrued.

The reference in the angel’s song to Israel’s happy crisis would be more apparent but for the

* See vol. ii. p. 326.

omission from our translation of the import of the word usually rendered holy, (*οσιος*), but which, as already observed, is a comprehensive term connected with the Divine relation to that favoured people.* The clause might with advantage be rendered thus:—"Righteous art thou, O Lord, the is, the was, the holy one, because thou hast judged thus." See also Psalm cxlv.

Ver. 6. *For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets.*] The Antichristian enemies of Israel will indeed have thus used the day of their ascendancy. Hence, the plaintive cry of Israel which we find in the Psalms. See Psalm xlv. 22; lxxix. 3. And now that cry will prove to have been heard by their Almighty Goël. "Precious" in His sight will be seen to be the blood of His saints, (Psalm cxvi. 15); and the angel reads this in the retribution at length visited upon their cruel persecutors.

And thou hast given them blood to drink, for they are worthy.] When the plague parallel to this was inflicted upon the Egyptians, we read that they "could not drink of the water of the river; and there was blood throughout all the land of Egypt." Exodus vii. 21. Instead of water, in fact, the usual sources of supply contained only blood. Hence, it is added, that they "dugged round about the river for water." Ver. 24.

* See vol. ii. p. 351.

Whether they succeeded in their search we are not informed. But, at all events, in the words of the clause before us, "*blood was given them to drink.*" For He who had before dispensed to them the refreshing element, now assigned to them this revolting substitute. So then will it be, only, we can conceive, with aggravated intensity, in the coming day of wrath. They who thirsted to shed blood, shall now have it to *drink*. They lusted for it with cruel heart, and now they shall have it in abundance. For in lieu of wherewithal to slake their physical thirst, they may be reduced to take the unnatural draught within their lips. Thus shall they be brought to a recollection of their crimes, and to feel, if not to acknowledge, the righteous severity of God. When Adonibezek, the Canaanitish king, underwent the amputation of his extremities, he remembered that on threescore and ten kings, he had perpetrated the same severity, and the exclamation was extorted from him: "As I have done, so God hath requited me." Judges i. 7. Thus may it be with the subjects of this appalling retribution before us. They may peradventure read their sin in their punishment. At all events, the connexion between the two is observed by the angelic agent, nor should it be overlooked by us, if we would appreciate the truth that our God is "righteous in all his ways and holy in all his works," Ps. cxlv. 17.

To be inspired with such reflection as this, is doubtless, to derive from the recital, one lesson of personal improvement, intended for us by the Spirit.

Ver. 7. *And I heard another out of the altar say.*] According to the best revisions of the original text, this clause runs thus:—*‘And I heard the altar say.’* We should here remember that from under the altar, the souls of the martyrs were represented, in the fifth seal, as crying for vengeance: “How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth.?” Rev. vi. 10. Therefore, that vengeance now running its course, the altar, not unfitly, becomes vocal, yielding its echo of admiring praise to the notes of the preceding angel. See 1 Kings xiii. 2.

Even so Lord God Almighty.] For the import of this threefold title, see pp. 344, 345.

True and righteous are thy judgments.] This is obviously to the same effect with the voice of the angel; and, no doubt, in this acknowledgment, all but the guilty will be found to unite. See p. 346.

Ver. 8. *And the fourth angel poured out his vial upon the sun.*] Still the same order is followed as in the trumpet plagues, only with more disastrous effects. See pp. 33, 35.

And power was given unto him to scorch men with fire.] Thus every part of the material system,

the earth, and the sea, the waters, and the very light of heaven, completely subjected to man's control, as he will vainly think, shall combine, at the Divine bidding, to punish the Antichristian multitude—'the men' it is literally, as in verse 2. Here, instead of the genial influence of the great luminary of day, with its attempered warmth, soothing and reviving to human life, shall prevail such an extremity of heat as will amount to scorching. Hence also, as already noticed,* the language descriptive of those ultimately redeemed: "Neither shall the sun light on them nor any heat." Chap. vii. 16.

And men were scorched with great heat, and blasphemed the name of God which hath power over these plagues.] Still the parties are defined the men, as it is in the Greek, *i. e.* the votaries of the Antichrist. Upon such, this new form of judgment comes; but like their Egyptian prototypes, they are hardened under it, yea, out of their corrupt hearts proceed "blasphemies." The power of God which they are made to feel only irritates. As sun worship, with other abominations, may be included in the prevailing idolatry of those days, (Ezek. viii. 16) the distempering influence of this orb may also wear a retributive aspect, and so inflame the impotent resentment of the guilty.

How vain, in the light of this picture, the

* Vol. i. p. 407.

thought of some, that the torment of the wicked hereafter will tend to their moral reformation !

And they repented not to give him glory.] To give glory to God by confessing their sin, and humbling themselves under His mighty hand, will have been the burden of the everlasting Gospel, proclaimed to mankind, by the angel flying in the midst of heaven. In marked opposition to this is the event now recorded. See vol. ii. pp. 161, 296.

Ver. 10. *And the fifth angel poured out his vial upon the seat of the beast.]* The expression here is literally the *throne* of the beast. It has occurred before in chap. ii. 13, in connexion with Satan : “ I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan’s seat (throne) is.” Such is the address of the Lord Jesus to the angel of the Church of Pergamos ; combining which, with the mention of the Dragon giving to the Beast (Rev. xiii. 2) his seat (throne), it has been already submitted that Pergamos is probably the place where the Antichrist will begin his career. But then, as has been already observed, the revived Babylon is to become the great capital of his kingdom eventually. Isaiah xiv. 4. Babylon therefore may be the scene of the outpouring of this fifth vial ; and as the moral centre of iniquity, the judgment upon its inhabitants is proportionably severe.

And his kingdom was full of darkness.] It would seem from this, that not only the city, where will

be the throne of the Antichrist; but his empire at large will be affected on this occasion, just as in the plague inflicted by Moses—darkness prevailed “*over all the land of Egypt.*” And no doubt, by the circumstantial details annexed to such former visitation, our conception of the present should be aided. Accordingly, as we read that “there was a thick darkness in all the land of Egypt three days: They saw not one another, neither rose any from his place for three days: but all the children of Israel had light in their dwellings,” (Ex. x. 22, 23) we may conjecture that the same dismay—Israel being still excepted—will attach to the future period here represented. See also Joel ii. 31, where the darkening of the sun is mentioned as a prominent feature of the “great and terrible day of the Lord.”

Ver. 11. *And they gnawed their tongues for pain, and blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds,*] What an awful picture this of suffering and rage combined. The several plagues now working their effects together,—the noisome sore, the revolting and pestilential blood instead of water, tantalizing to the excited thirst, and the torrid heat of the sun; whereat, now ensues the self-torturing convulsion of despair, and anon the hurling of blasphemous defiance at the offended Majesty of heaven. In the case of the apostate

Jewish community, upon whom the trumpet plagues descend, we read at the last that the survivors “were affrighted and gave glory to God.” ch. xi. 13. Not so these Antichristian Gentiles, of them it is here recorded, that they “repented not of their deeds,”—a token of their appointed doom; just as it is said of Hophni and Phineas, that “they hearkened not to the voice of their father, because the Lord would slay them.” 1 Sam. ii. 25. See also 2 Chron. xxv. 16; 2 Thes. ii. 11, 12.

Ver. 12. *And the sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates.*] That this is the literal Euphrates—a principal boundary of the land of Canaan—cannot be doubted by any plain unsophisticated reader. The very phrase as we have it here, “the great river Euphrates,” is continually employed in this sense, and no other, in the Old Testament. Gen. xv. 18; Deut. i. 7; Jos. i. 4. It is a mere tradition, and a modern one, that the Turkish Empire is denoted.

And the water thereof was dried up.] We thus learn that there will be a renewal of the Lord’s marvellous works of old as at Israel’s passage of the Red Sea and the river Jordan. Ex. xiv. 21; Josh. iii. 15, 16. To the same effect, speaks the parallel prophecy of Isaiah:—“The Lord shall utterly destroy the tongue of the Egyptian sea; and with his mighty wind shall he shake his hand

over the river, and shall smite it in the seven streams,* and make men go over dryshod. And there shall be an highway for the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria; like as it was to Israel in the day that he came up out of the land of Egypt.” Isaiah xi. 15, 16. The Prophet Zechariah, also, whilst reiterating this miracle, seems to refer to the personal presence of Jehovah as leading the way on the occasion:—“And he shall pass through the sea with affliction, and shall smite the waves in the sea, and all the deeps of the river shall dry up.” Zech. x. 11.

That the way of the kings of the east might be prepared.] Here the design of the drying up of the Euphrates is explained—it is for the passage of certain parties called “*the kings of the east,*” or more literally ‘*the kings from the sun-rising.*’ We had the same expression *sun-rising* before, in connexion with the agency employed in the sealing of the twelve tribes. See chap. vii. 2. (Gr.) Nor should this coincidence be now lost sight of in the determination of who are intended by the kings in the present vision. It should certainly suggest to us that some of the tribes of Israel may be concerned. And when we remember that of those tribes, ten were carried away to countries beyond the Euphrates (2 Kings xviii. 11);

* This clause—“shall smite it in the seven streams” may be translated ‘*shall smite it into seven streams.*’ See Keith on Isaiah, a most valuable publication.

whilst the word of prophecy is full of references, not only to their restoration, in common with the other tribes, but to their employment, of God, in some remarkable way, as the executive of his will in treading down the Antichristian nations,—we should not be unprepared for their introduction into the scene before us, as crossing the Euphrates from the region of their long exile. It may be interesting to add, not as authority, but as showing the purport of ancient opinion on this subject, that after the manner now assigned, is rehearsed in the Apocryphal book of Esdras, the return of these ten tribes :—

“ Those are the ten tribes which were carried away prisoners out of their own land, in the time of Osea the king, whom Salmanasar the king of Assyria led away captive, and he carried them over the waters, and so came they into another land. But they took this counsel among themselves, that they would leave the multitude of the heathen, and go forth into a further country, where never mankind dwelt, that they might keep their statutes, which they never kept in their own land. And they entered into Euphrates, by the narrow passages of the river. For the most High then shewed signs for them, and held still the flood, till they were passed over. For through that country there was a great way to go; namely, of a year and a half: and

the same region is called Arsareth. Then dwelt they there until the latter time ; and now when they shall begin to come, the Highest shall stay the springs of the stream again, that they may go through." 2 Esdras xiii. 40—47.

It only remains to account for the title, *Kings*, attaching to the ten tribes according to this interpretation. On this point, perhaps, we should call to mind the predicted rule of Israel over the nations. Thus we read of them, that they are to be "a kingdom of Priests" (Ex. xix. 6); that the children of the restored Jerusalem are to be made "Princes in all the earth" (Psalm xlv. 16); and that "the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High." Dan. vii. 27.

But one passage in the Prophet Isaiah may especially be adduced as clearing up, not only the particular phraseology in question, but the whole vision with which it is connected ; a passage which both yields, and, as we shall also find, receives remarkable light from being thus compared with the Apocalypse. Indeed, it has bid defiance to commentators, only because of their not seeking its elucidation in this quarter. The passage referred to is Isaiah xli. 2, 3. The chapter begins by a summons to the inhabitants of the earth to take knowledge of the act of Jehovah,

recited in the following interrogation:—"Who raised up the righteous man from the east, called him to his foot, gave the nations before him, and made him rule over kings? he gave them as the dust to his sword, and as driven stubble to his bow." In vain it is alleged by commentators that the allusion here is to the victorious march of Cyrus, when, at the head of the Medes and Persians, he conquered Babylon. For his connection was only with *the two tribes* which constituted the kingdom of Judah; whereas, from the context of this prophecy, (ver. 8.) it is obvious that the event celebrated has an especial bearing on the fortunes of *Israel or the ten tribes*.

With as little justice also can this martial career be predicated of Abraham, in regard to the onset of himself and his small band of domestic followers upon the confederate kings, mentioned in Genesis xiv. For this was quite a solitary adventure of the kind, in the life of the father of the faithful, and undertaken, not for purposes of dominion and conquest, but simply for the rescue of his nephew, Lot. Neither would the ascription to him, personally, of the traits of a resistless conqueror, subduing nations, and ruling over kings, at all agree with the Spirit's designation of him in the Epistle to the Hebrews:—"By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling

in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the said promise: for he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." Heb. xi. 9, 10. This is the description, not of a military chieftain, filling the earth with the fame of his deeds of arms, but rather of the quiet unobtrusive occupant of pastoral life.

The only other view of this prophecy which remains to be noticed is that which applies it to the person of Messiah. The allegation in regard to his first advent is, of course, unworthy of attention. Neither, however, is it satisfactory if we extend it to the period of his second advent, except as we include *Israel* or the ten tribes under his leadership; which is, in fact, equivalent to an admission that the ten tribes are the parties intended. And such, it is submitted, in the light of the Apocalypse, is the true interpretation of the passage, evading none of its clauses, whilst to one especially it assigns a fulness of meaning, not otherwise obtained.

1. In the first place, comparing verse 1, with verse 8, "the righteous man" answers to the ten tribes, or Israel, headed up, as they are, in the person of their great forefather whether Jacob or Abraham; and both, it will be observed, are in the Divine mind, on the occasion of the utterance of this prophecy.

2. Secondly, to these parties, Israel, or the ten tribes, we learn from other Scriptures, belongs just such a career of conquest over the nations as is here rehearsed. Jer. li. 19—23. Indeed, in this very context, such glorious destiny of Israel is alluded to:—"Fear not, thou worm, Jacob. . . . Behold I will make thee a new sharp threshing instrument having teeth: thou shalt thresh the mountains and beat them small, and shalt make the hills as chaff. Thou shalt fan them, and the wind shall carry them away, and the whirlwind shalt scatter them." Isaiah xli. 14—16. By these allusions to the processes of husbandry, threshing and winnowing, wherein the sheaves were wont to be crushed, and the chaff scattered to the winds, the avenging progress of Israel against their enemies is most strikingly represented.

3. Thirdly, they shall come from the East, inasmuch as they shall come from beyond the Euphrates, according to the vision before us in the Apocalypse.

4. But, fourthly,—and this is the point to which the reader's attention has been already bespoken,—their passage over the channel of the dried up river exactly answers to the Prophet's language: "He pursued them, and passed safely, EVEN BY THE WAY THAT HE HAD NOT GONE WITH HIS FEET." The explanation of this latter clause, by the event before us in the Apocalypse, is full and clear, whilst on no other view that has

been advanced, can any thing really intelligible be gleaned from it. The following are specimens of what commentators, with other views of the passage, have been reduced to put forth.

Applying it to Abraham, *Matthew Henry* says, that the patriarch “pursued them (the kings who had carried off Lot) and passed safely, or in peace, under the Divine protection, *though it was in a way he was altogether unacquainted with.*” *

Bishop Horsley, who takes the reference to be to a personification of true religion as planted by Christ, observes: “By the propagation of the Gospel, *it was carried through roads untrodden by it before, into regions which it had never visited.* But,” adds the learned prelate, “if Christ be the person intended by the noun **ἵνα**, the promulgation of the Gospel by instruments naturally unqualified for the business, is proverbially described in these expressions. *The first preachers of the Gospel, not bred in the schools of human learning, travelled a road which they had never trodden before when they engaged in controversy with the Jewish Divines and the Greek Philosophers, and made their apologies before kings and rulers; and Christ, in these His emissaries, opened an unbeaten road, and passed through it safely.*” †

Mr. Govett writes: “By his ‘passing safely a way not trodden with his feet,’ is signified that *the*

* *Matthew Henry, in loco.*

† *Bishop Horsley, in loco.*

*advent of the Saviour shall be FROM HEAVEN, and in a cloud, not upon the earth, as the false Messiah's who assumes his name and arrogates his powers."**

Barnes, who adopts the view of the expeditions of Cyrus being alluded to, says: "The idea here is, that *he* (Cyrus) *had not travelled in these regions until he did it for purposes of conquest.*" †

Keith, indeed, approaches the identification of the ten tribes as the parties intended, but from overlooking this vision of the Apocalypse, is constrained to dismiss the passage thus: "Its import can be known only by its accomplishment." ‡

e All this obscurity, practically disclosed and admitted by different writers on their respective hypothesis, may serve to commend to the reader the interpretation now proposed, which leaves no obscurity behind; the passage of the exhausted Euphrates being emphatically *a way not trodden before by the feet of Israel*.

What will be the appointed career for these recovered and Divinely conducted tribes, after they cross the Euphrates, is not here mentioned; but from other Scriptures we may gather, that they will be used of God against Antichristian nations, and especially it would seem, against Babylon, as the principal human organization for its destined destruction. Jer. li. 24. Thus, under the head of

* Rev. R. Govett's "Isaiah Unfulfilled," *in loco*.

† Barnes on Isaiah, *in loco*.

‡ Keith, "Isaiah as it is."

“the burden of Babylon,” we read: “I have commanded my sanctified ones, I have also called my mighty ones for mine anger, even them that rejoice in my highness. The noise of a multitude in the mountains, like as of great people; a tumultuous noise of the kingdoms of nations gathered together; the Lord of hosts mustereth the host of the battle. They come from a far country, from the end of heaven, even the Lord, and the weapons of his indignation, to destroy the whole land.” Isa. xiii. 3—5. Here, it is probable, that by “*my sanctified ones*,” are meant Israel, or the ten tribes; whilst, by the following term, “*my mighty ones*,” certain Gentile powers may be denoted, who shall act with Israel in Divinely ordered concert. Elsewhere, this two-fold agency is still more clearly defined, and the panic it produces is added: “One post shall run to meet another, and one messenger to meet another, to shew the king of Babylon that his city is taken at one end, and that the passages are stopped, and the reeds they have burned with fire, and the men of war are affrighted.” Jer. li. 31, 32. Again, the incursion of the same parties seems contemplated in the prophet Daniel, where we read that “tidings out of the *east* and out of the *north* (the very regions assignable to the ten tribes, and the fore-mentioned Gentile powers) shall trouble him,” *i.e.* the Antichrist—the king of Babylon. Dan. xi. 44.

That many from amongst the tribes of Judah

will be again captive in Babylon is clearly implied by the summons to them, at some favourable crisis, to depart out of her;* and, possibly, that crisis will be when the ten tribes assemble in the siege against her. The deliverance of Judah being thus effected, then, also, may be the period for the movement of *all the tribes* combined towards their own land, according to the language of Hosea: “Then shall the children of Judah and the children of Israel be gathered together, and appoint themselves one head, and they shall come up out of the land (*i. e.* from *the earth*, from *all parts of the earth*, according to Bishop Horsley): for great shall be the day of Jezreel.” Hos. i. 11. See also Jer. l. 4; Isa. xi. 12, 13. Perhaps, in Ps. cvii., we have a rehearsal of the varied marvellous experience of these favoured tribes, as they pursue their way to the land of their fathers.

Ver. 13. *And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet.*] We have just seen Jehovah’s procedure in regard to Israel, or the ten tribes—mustering them, in the face of the nations, for their career of victorious warfare, of old assigned to them. And now, answering to this, we have a *diabolical* agency at work, to organize the powers

* Isa. xlviii. 20; lii. 11; Jer. l. 8, 28; li. 6, 45; Zech. ii. 6, 7. Compare Rev. xviii. 4, with Zech. xiv. 2.

of the earth in rebellion against the Divine will. Such agency, we know, was employed at the first advent of our Lord to enthrall the bodies of men ; and ere the exorcising voice of the Great Deliverer was obeyed, the unclean spirit was wont to convulse its victim with desperate though abortive struggles. Mark ix. 25, 26. It should not, therefore, surprise us, that at the period of the second advent to redeem the earth, unclean spirits should be commissioned to evoke resistance from every quarter of the globe.

That these emissaries of evil issue out of the mouth of the Dragon, the Beast, and the False Prophet, the infernal Trinity of hell, as they may be denominated, is significant of the complete authority with which they shall be endued ; whilst their comparison to frogs is, perhaps, only intended to be in keeping with their alleged issue from the *mouth* of their blasphemous Patrons.

Ver. 14. *For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings [of the earth and] of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty.* Here we have a further designation of these diabolical agents ; they are the spirits of devils or *demons*.* The special purport of their mission is, also, defined ; namely, to incite “ the kings of the whole world,” (the previous clause,

* Upon the meaning of this word see vol. ii. p. 82.

“of the earth,” is considered to be an interpolation,) to insurrection against the Divine purpose. A clear precedent of this employment of evil spirits is supplied to us in the Old Testament, in the history of Ahab’s expedition against Ramoth-gilead—a history, no doubt, typical of the very scene before us. At first, the naked fact is stated of Ahab’s determination to prosecute this expedition, at the instigation of the False Prophets. This is all that appears to the eye of sense. But, presently, the curtain of the invisible world is drawn by the faithful Micaiah, who recounts the vision he had had of the secret process of delusion :—“I saw the Lord,” he says, “sitting upon his throne, and all the host of heaven standing on his right hand and on his left. And the Lord said, Who shall entice Ahab king of Israel, that he may go up and fall at Ramoth-gilead? And one spake, saying after this manner, and another saying after that manner. Then there came out a spirit, and stood before the Lord, and said, I will entice him. And the Lord said unto him, Wherewith? And he said, I will go out, and be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets. And the Lord said, Thou shalt entice him, and thou shalt also prevail: go out, and do even so. Now therefore, behold, the Lord hath put a lying spirit in the mouth of these thy prophets, and the Lord hath spoken

evil against thee." 2 Chron. xviii. 18—22. Here is disclosed the working of an evil spirit, (of course, by permission of God,) as at the root of Ahab's enterprize against Ramoth-gilead. The false prophets, who surrounded the impious monarch, were but *conductors* of the inspiration from beneath; and in like manner will it be at the crisis before us. The spirits of devils, energizing in the false prophets that will then abound, shall combine all earthly rule and principality and power in one common opposition to the coming kingdom of Messiah.

To this, also, agrees the note of warning, concerning the latter times, which is given in the Epistles. "Some," writes St. Paul, "shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines (teachings) of devils." 1 Tim. iv. 1. And, to the same effect, Peter admonishes to beware of "false teachers," whom he classes with the false prophets of old. 2 Peter ii. 1.

Thus manifold agencies of evil shall be in requisition to deceive mankind. But still, in all this, God's hand will be uppermost, at length bringing to an issue the strife between good and evil. And so, the end is defined to be, in this case, a gathering of the kings of the earth to "the battle of that great day of God Almighty," as we also read in the Prophet Zephaniah:—"Therefore wait ye upon me, saith the Lord,

until the day that I rise up to the prey : for my determination is to gather the nations, that I may assemble the kingdoms, to pour upon them mine indignation, even all my fierce anger : for all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of my jealousy." Zeph. iii. 8. See also, Joel iii. 2.

Ver. 15. *Behold, I come as a thief.*] The interjection here of this solemn warning would seem to imply that now, at this juncture, the iniquity of the nations has become full ; and, therefore, the personal coming of the Lord Jesus to take vengeance upon them, may occur at any moment. The reader, however, will remember that this is the coming of the Lord *with* his saints, not his coming *for* them—the previous event which so especially constitutes the hope of the Church of God. See on chap. iii. 4, vol. 1, p.p. 188—198, 248.

Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.] The night of Antichristian violence will have lasted so long, amidst the earnest aspirations after the promised day, that we can easily imagine the faithful on the earth to need a stimulus to continued vigilance. Hope excited and deferred, often produces a depressing influence.* We know that Israel's sufferings of old, at the hand of Pharaoh, being at first aggravated by the

* Proverbs xiii. 12.

very intervention of Moses to deliver them, led them to despair of enlargement (Ex.v. 20, 21); and the same experience, with its paralysing tendency, may operate at the crisis before us. Here, accordingly, is a note of combined comfort and warning, such as the occasion requires. See also Luke xxi. 34—36.

The latter clause, “keepeth his garments,” &c., is supposed by some to refer to the Jewish custom of the captain of the temple perambulating the different wards at night, and disgracing those watchmen whom he found slumbering at their posts by firing their dress. But, perhaps, the simple allusion is to the case of a party appointed to hold himself in readiness for a sudden expedition, being surprised in the undress which only belongs to the night season. In the parable which our Lord spoke of the marriage feast, illustrating thereby the preliminary events connected with the introduction of the kingdom of heaven, (*Jewish* hope, be it remembered) he seems to couch the same warning under the similitude of the man without a wedding garment, who, when interrogated on the subject, was speechless; and was then cast into outer darkness. Matt. xxii. 12. To those thus represented, then, a nakedness may be said to attach, in the language of Scripture, just as it is ascribed to Peter on the occasion of his being without the usual overcoat of the fisherman.

John xxi. 7. Children of God! to you appertains more than the kingdom, even glorious fellowship with the Great King himself. Oh, then, “gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace which is to be brought unto you at his revelation”—the very dawn of his appearing. 1 Pet. i. 13. “Ye are children of the day, and are not in darkness that that day should overtake you as a thief. Watch, therefore, and be sober,” and hearken to the tender touching gracious argument of the Holy Ghost, whereby he urges this exhortation: “For God hath not appointed us to wrath,” (the dreadful ordeal of the day of the Lord, through which others shall have to pass) “but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that, whether we watch* or sleep, we should live together with him.” 1 Thes. v. 9, 10. As much as to say: ‘The love of the Lord Jesus has been irrevocable to you. Even if you sleep, like the disciples in the garden of Gethsemane, he has died for you, as he groaned and agonized for them. Matt. xxvi. 37—45. Surely, this generous appeal of unconditional uncalculating love must be an antidote to all sleep, all unwatchfulness!’

* I have translated this word, as it unquestionably ought to be translated, in uniformity with its use in the former part of the context. And I may add, that the word “sleep,” to which it is opposed, is a different word from that employed in 1 Thes. iv. 14; and therefore the allusion is not, as may appear at first sight, to the quick and dead in Christ, but to the watchfulness and unwatchfulness of living believers.

Ver. 16. *And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon.*] It is a common rule, in Greek, for a neuter plural to take a verb in the singular; accordingly, the reading here may be, “and *they* (*i. e.* the unclean spirits) gathered them,” a reading, moreover, which is more consonant with the context; although, if we take the clause as it is, it may be still intelligible, as indicating that, after all, this gathering together of his enemies is of the Lord himself, as He designs to overrule it for his own glory. The place of muster is designated *Armageddon*, to which name various etymologies are assigned. But, doubtless, the most correct is that which connects it with *Megiddo*, in the land of Palestine; where, at the instigation of Deborah, Barak, with ten thousand men of the children of Napthali and Zabulon, routed the hosts of Jabin, king of Canaan.

1. The record of this battle is of itself suggestive of the scene before us, for it is summed up in similar words: “The kings came and fought; then fought the kings of Canaan in Taanach by the waters of Megiddo.” Judges v. 19.

2. The cause of Israel’s victory, on this occasion, was that the Lord went before them (Judges iv. 14.); and so, in the final conflict, the Lord heads his armies, doubtless including Israel. Rev. xix. 11—14.

3. The inspired celebration, by Deborah, of Israel's triumph, obviously makes it the pattern and type of some future demonstration against all the enemies of God : " So let all thine enemies perish, O Lord ; but let them that love Him be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might." Judges v. 31.

Ver. 17. *And the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air.*] To understand the import of this seventh vial, we should bear in mind the position in which matters are left under the sixth vial ; that, by the agency of wicked spirits, the kings of the whole world have been gathered together within the confines of the holy land, in arms against Jehovah and in opposition to his purposes. The seventh vial, it is therefore natural to suppose, comprehends the Divine judgments on this confederacy. But will it be only a confederacy of the powers of *earth* ? Or rather will it not include other parties, even legions of evil angels, with their superhuman resources ? The question seems solved in the affirmative by the language of the Prophet Isaiah, in manifest allusion to this tremendous scene of conflict ; " And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall punish the host of the high ones that are on high, and the kings of the earth upon the earth. And they shall be gathered together, as prisoners are gathered in the pit."

Isaiah xxiv. 21, 22. Here is certainly a twofold band of belligerents dealt with ; a contrast is even drawn between them in regard to their respective seats of action. One party, the kings of the earth, occupy *the earth*, the other are *on high*. Who can these latter be but wicked spirits ; who, notwithstanding their precipitation from heaven to earth, (see chap. xii. 9,) may yet be holding a position of ascendancy, immediately over the heads of their human allies, rallying them to the dreadful combat ? Hence it is, perhaps, that, as a sign of discomfiture to the whole rebellious host, the seventh angel pours his vial into *the air*, the seat of those malicious demons. See Ephes. ii. 2 ; vi. 12.

And there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, It is done.] To initiate the outpouring of the vials, a great voice had issued forth out of the temple. Ver. 1. The same voice, doubtless, which now proclaims the process of judgment to be consummated ; and as it comes “ *from the throne,*” the natural inference is, as already observed, that it is the voice of the Lord Jesus, referred to in chap. i. 10 ; and chap. iv. 1. This is confirmed by the fact, that in chap. xxi. 6, the same emphatic word, “ *it is done,*” is pronounced by the Lord Jesus ; which word, also, as it there obviously contemplates the final act of redemption in the

creation of the new heavens and earth, possesses, perhaps, the like extended meaning here. And thus the destruction of the Antichristian hosts, with its attendant events, is presented to the eye of faith, as amongst the last pangs to be gone through by this travailing world, and as the harbinger of its consummated blessedness.

Ver. 18. *And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings.*] See on chap. iv. 5; viii. 5; xi. 19.

And there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great.] As already observed, on the relation between the *seals*, the trumpets, and the *vials* of this book, the two latter series being the detailed rendering out of the judgment on Jew and Gentile, which are condensed under the one former series, the great earthquake here and that of the sixth seal (chap. vi. 12) are the same.* The consternation and dismay there depicted harmonize at least with the terrifying character of the phenomenon in its present recital, whilst the introduction into such of other emotions agitating men's breasts now, even rage and blasphemy, only shews that herein the mind of the Spirit is to mark the ultimate exasperation which succeeds, and it may be by a very rapid transition. There will be a change, we have

* See vol. i. pp. 307—314; vol. ii. p. 154.

seen,* from consternation to resistance ; and that blasphemy should accompany that resistance is what we should expect.

The unprecedented greatness of this earthquake, which is so emphatically affirmed, should lead us perhaps to interpret of the same phenomenon the tremendous commotions alluded to in Psalm xviii. “ Then the earth shook and trembled : the foundations also of the hills moved and were shaken, because he was wroth. Then the channels of waters were seen, and the foundations of the world were discovered at thy rebuke, O Lord, at the blast of the breath of thy nostrils. He sent from above, he took me, he drew me out of many waters. He brought me forth also into a large place ; he delivered me, because he delighted in me.” Ver. 7, 15, 16, 19. The purport of these last expressions being the celebration, in the person of Messiah, of Israel’s complete redemption, confirms the idea that the phenomena described belong to this earthquake under the seventh vial. For here, also, the connection is the same, as we shall see presently by the verses which follow.

In the Prophet Ezekiel, moreover, in reference to the invasion of the land of Israel by the armies of Gog, which coincides, we cannot doubt, with the gathering together of the kings of the earth,

* Compare chap. vi. 16, with chap. xix. 19, and see vol. i. p. 376.

the earthquake before us seems plainly discernible under the following allusion: "Surely in that day there shall be a great shaking in the land of Israel; so that the fishes of the sea, and the fowls of the heaven, and the beasts of the field, and all creeping things that creep upon the earth, and all the men that are upon the face of the earth, shall shake at my presence; and the mountains shall be thrown down, and the steep places shall fall, and every wall shall fall to the ground." Ezek. xxxviii. 19, 20. Are not the convulsions of this same earthquake further included in the language of the Prophet Haggai? (and here, also, the connection is with the renewal of the Divine favor to the Jewish people)—"Thus saith the Lord of hosts, Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens and the earth, and the sea and the dry land; and I will shake all nations." Hag. ii. 6, 7.

Ver. 19. *And the great city was divided into three parts.*] We have already had mention made of *Jerusalem*, under this title, "the great city." Chap. xi. 8. And although it is quite true that such title belongs to Babylon as well, yet the context indicates the allusion here to be again to the former. For, Babylon comes to be expressly spoken of in a following clause; and its fall is entire, not limited to a third part. Moreover, the foregoing gathering of kings being

to Armageddon, situate in the land of Palestine, the transition to Jerusalem, the capital thereof, seems to be more natural—more in unison with the subject.

A “*tenth* part” of it (the city) will have fallen before, on the occasion of God’s interposition in behalf of his slaughtered witnesses, raising them from the dead in the sight of their exulting enemies, and in the ruin will have perished multitudes of the apostate Jews. Chap. xi. 13. But now the scene of devastation shall be greater—a *third* part shall fall; and it may be because the parties concerned are the Antichristian Gentiles.

Perhaps, coincident with this effect of the earthquake on the city, will be the cleaving in twain of the Mount of Olives, and the formation in the midst of “a very great valley,” according to the prophecy of Zechariah. Chap. xiv. 4.

And the cities of the nations fell.] That is, the confederate nations; of whose kings we have been reading as assembled at Armageddon. Thus the day of the Lord shall be “upon every high tower and upon every fenced wall.” Isaiah ii. 15.

And great Babylon came in remembrance before God.] That is, the literal city of this name yet to be revived,* the teeming source of every abomination—the centre, whence iniquity will be propagated throughout the earth, in

* See vol. i. p.p. 161—163, 364—368; vol. ii. 302—304.

contrast with Jerusalem, whence “will go forth the law, and the word of the Lord.” Isaiah ii. 3. This corrupt and corrupting city will now come under the Divine judgment, even as Sodom and Gomorrah of old ; whose manner of destruction, further yields some features of similitude to the doom which yet awaits Babylon. Isaiah xiii. 19.

To give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath.] The language here used in regard to this retribution on Babylon, is doubtless intended, to answer to her infamous distinction, as circulating among the nations her golden cup of abomination. She will have made them drunk with the wine of the wrath of her fornication. Now she shall drink herself of the wine of the fierceness of the Divine wrath, or rather, she has already drunk of it under the vial judgments, which, as to their particular bearing on her, will be yet more minutely detailed ; and all that remains is the consummating stroke ready to descend on her, the rehearsal of which presently follows.

Ver. 20. *And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found.]* Thus we have further information as to the effect of the earthquake ; and hereby we are again led to identify it with the earthquake under the sixth seal. For, amongst the concomitant prodigies there related, we read : “every mountain and island were moved out of

their places." Rev. vi. 14. The parallelism of expression with the clause before us is strikingly obvious. It is not the scene, of course, which is rehearsed in chap. xx., where it is said that "*the heaven fled away*" from the face of him that sat on the great white throne. Ver. 11. This takes place at the close of the millennial dispensation, when shall be the "new heavens and a new earth" state—the consummation of this world's regenerate condition under that preliminary reign of Christ and his saints. But though not the final ordeal reserved for creation to pass through, yet this before us may be attended with more of physical catastrophe. It seems indeed to convey to the mind the idea of chaos come again; as though the whole earth was reduced to the condition mentioned in Genesis—"without form and void." Gen. i. 2. And, indeed, in the Old Testament, such is the very description of this crisis employed by the Holy Ghost: "I beheld the earth, and, lo, it was without form and void; and the heavens, and they had no light. I beheld the mountains, and, lo, they trembled, and all the hills moved lightly. I beheld, and, lo, there was no man, and all the birds of the heavens were fled. I beheld, and, lo, the fruitful place was a wilderness, and all the cities thereof were broken down at the presence of the Lord, and by his fierce anger." Jer. iv. 23—26. Here is every

accumulation of expression to indicate a complete revolution of the earth, quite coming up to the imagery of the Apocalypse.*

And there fell upon men a great hail out of heaven.] Such was amongst the visitations of old upon Egypt:—"There was hail, and fire mingled with hail, very grievous, such as there was none like it in all the land of Egypt since it became a

* It may be interesting to observe, in passing, that the foregoing description, "without form and void," being manifestly applied, as in this passage, to a state of disorganization *superinduced* by judgment, furnishes a clue for the understanding of Gen. i. 2, whereby to meet every possible allegation of Geology concerning the antiquity of the matter of the earth.

Thus, when it is said, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth," ver. 1, we may understand this, as referring not to an inchoate but complete work of the Divine hand; that is, not to the mere origination of *matter*—but to its organization as *heaven and earth*, according, be it observed, to the precise words of the text. Then—as the sacred record adds, in another distinct proposition,—“The earth was (or *became*, as we may read it, and looking to the analogy of Jer. iv. 23, we may add, *by reason of some stroke of judgment*) without form and void.” Ver. 2. Indeed, the proposition of a chaotic state attaching to the earth originally, is emphatically denied in the Prophet Isaiah,—“For thus saith the Lord that created the heavens; God himself that formed the earth and made it, he hath established it, *he created it not IN VAIN,*” or WITHOUT FORM, (the word is the same as in Genesis.) Isaiah xlv. 18. How long, accordingly, before it was reduced to this state, and how long it lay therein afterwards, ere Jehovah spoke it into form for *man’s* occupation, as we are not informed in Scripture, so it is obvious there is nothing for the deductions of science to contradict.

nation. And the hail smote throughout all the land of Egypt, all that was in the field, both man and beast ; and the hail smote every herb of the field, and brake every tree of the field." Exodus ix. 24, 25.

Every stone about the weight of a talent.] In regard to the plague of hail upon Egypt, we are not informed of its size, though it must have been considerable, from its doing damage to both man and beast. Here, however, the description is more minute ; the hail is compared to a talent, that is, to a hundred pounds in weight, so ponderous and crushing shall it be in its descent. Perhaps, the best aid to our conception of this tremendous infliction is the account of Israel's warfare, of old, against the Canaanites, wherein we read that, on one occasion, "as they (the Canaanites) fled from before Israel, and were in the going down to Beth-horon, that the Lord cast down great stones from heaven upon them unto Azekah, and they died : they were more which died with hailstones than they whom the children of Israel slew with the sword." Josh. x. 11.

And men (the men) blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail ; for the plague thereof was exceeding great.] Such will be the effect upon the Antichrist and his hosts, of even this manifest display of judgment from heaven. Those who survive—perhaps the very parties in whose

crushed bodies life only lingers for a season—will blaspheme God; another proof that mere punishment is not reformatory of the wicked. See on ver. 11.

Having thus arrived at the close of the third integral division of this book, it may be well to remind the reader that there has now passed before him the revelation of the day of wrath and righteous judgment of God, which the Apostle speaks of as ready to descend upon the Jew first and also upon the Gentile. Rom. ii. 5—11. Under the trumpets, the visitation on the former is rehearsed; under the vials, that on the latter,—both series being comprised, it is to be observed, within that of the seals. 'This disclosure of the future, how pregnant with alarm to a careless world! And though the elect Church of God be not themselves to be involved in it,* yet is it plain that they have it confided to them, as was the fate of Sodom and Gomorrah to Abraham, to be matter of communion with God, and faithful testimony among men.

Oh, that every child of God, who reads these pages, may be thus exercised in heart and life! And so in his case, at least, the practical power

* This exemption of the Church from the latter-day tribulation, as already noticed, is implied in its omission from the classification of mankind in the text just cited, for it enumerates only Jews and Gentiles, whereas, in the category of 1 Cor. x. 32, designed to include the Church—the same is expressly mentioned—"the Jews, the Gentiles, and the Church of God." See Vol. i. 312, 313.

of this book of the Apocalypse be at length vindicated. When Israel of old, in Egypt, were observed abiding within their blood be-sprinkled houses, staff in hand, awaiting the signal to be gone, the Egyptians, doubtless, felt a presage of their impending woe. Child of God! who art conversant with this book of the Apocalypse, let the same eloquence of posture be yours, to admonish a careless world. Let it be seen that you build your home on high,—token of the shock which is coming upon all below, the vain portion of those that know not God.

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ERRATA.

- Page 73, line 4 ; for, "continued," read, "combined."
 — 132, last line ; for, "be," read, "act."
 — 154, line 16 ; for, "sixth vial," read, "seventh vial."
 — 172, note ; for, "143—150," read, "248—253, 257—262."
 — 180, line 8 ; after, "myself," read, "Isaiah xxxiii. 8—10."
 — 184, line 27 ; for, "capitol," read, "capital."
 — 203, line 3 ; for, "prophecy," read "propheesy."
 — 259, line 13 ; for, "failing," read, "failure."
 — 263, line 26 ; for, "glorified," read, "gloried."
 — 288, line 25 ; for, "Jer. iv. 22," read, "Jer. xxxi. 9."

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